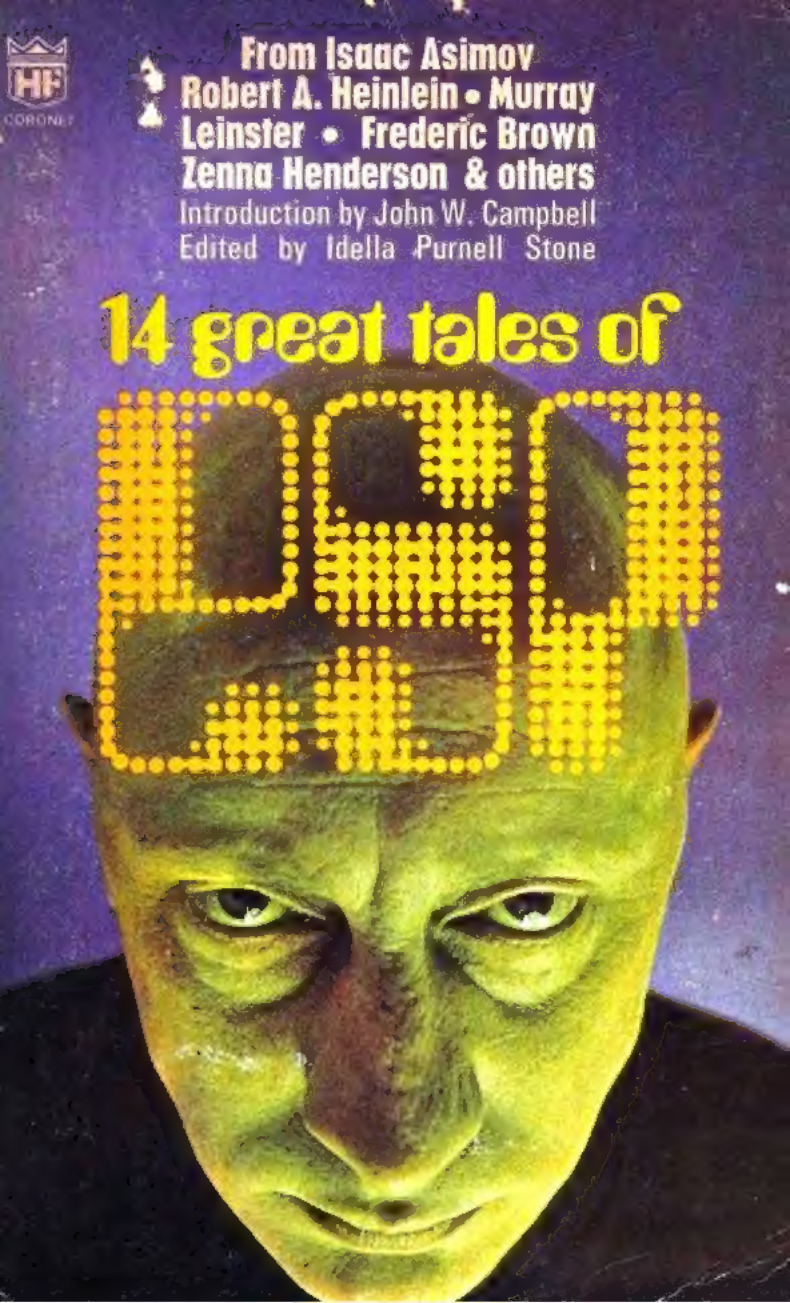
CORONET

From Isaac Asimov
Robert A. Heinlein • Murray
Leinster • Frederic Brown
Zenna Henderson & others

Introduction by John W. Campbell
Edited by Idella Purnell Stone

14 great tales of



14 great tales of ESP

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Edited by Idella Purnell Stone

With an Introduction by John W. Campbell



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IN GRATITUDE

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INTRODUCTION

THERE IS A GENERAL—AND I CAN ASSURE you deeply mistaken notion that editors print just the kind of stories they want.

This is not true for the simple reason that an editor necessarily prints only the kind of stories he gets. And in the realm of "esp," "ESP," or "psi" stories I by no means succeeded in getting anywhere near the quantity of the quality I wanted. It took eight years of editing *Astounding Science Fiction*—which changed its name but not its character when it became *Analog*—to accumulate the stories Mrs. Stone has selected from *Analog* for this volume. Really good, well-thought-out psi stories are astonishingly hard to come by!

It has interested me considerably that they should be scarce. As a science-fiction editor for over thirty years, I've seen an immense volume of imaginative writing, most of it naturally varying between bad and unspeakable. There's fantasy and there's science fiction—and the two are not the same. A couple of decades ago most people were convinced that stories about rocketships to the Moon and the planets were just as nonsensically fantastic as stories of fairies, vampires, and witches. A decade before that, the science-fiction tales of atomic power plants, atomic bombs, and such "pseudo-science fantasies" were equally flatly rejected by "any real scientist who knows the laws of nature." I started writing such sto-

ries, and was roundly censured for it by my professors, when I was n freshman at MIT in 1929.

As we are aware today, such things were *not* "pseudo-science fantasies"; the science-fictioneers were in fact thinking more clearly, more rationally, than the accredited scientists of the time! The scientific world changed its opinion very abruptly in August 1945, on the subject of atomic energy and atomic weapons. The disciplined imagination of the science-fiction writers had been more nearly accurate than the disciplined conservatism of the orthodox scientists.

When Sputnik finally soared overhead, a similar revolution of thinking with respect to the possibility of interplanetary rocket devices came about.

In each instance, the reluctance to consider the change in their world-picture—of what the universe allows, and of what can and cannot be done—prevented acceptance of the "fantastic" notions. They were *not* fantasy; they were science-projections, simply projected beyond the area where the professional scientists of the time felt safe.

That motivation is very old. The underlying fear of the unknown, of upsetting the stability and order and understandability of the world has haunted men always. It is what led originally to the concept of "ghoulies and ghosties and things that go 'boomp!' i' the night!" Better the demon they had put a name to and therefore "knew," than the demon they knew not of. Call him Asmodeus, call him Beelzebub—at least that way you know who it is that's the menace in the dark. Anything is better than a nameless, undefined power that can do unpredictable things. We would rather accept the werewolf that can be controlled with silver bullet, holy water, rue, and garlic, than the nameless Awful whose menace is "out there" but whom we don't know how to control or deal with.

Fantasy is the product of an undisciplined imagination. In fantasy, anything goes—there are no limitations of logic or law. Not only does the author make up his menaces as he goes along but he is free to change them, and to change the laws regarding them, as suits him. *Deus ex machina* is not the exceptional device to force a termina-

tion—it is Standard Operating Machinery. In effect, the author is free to say, "I didn't tell you before, but . . ." and throw in some new hooker he just thought of. As an undisciplined imaginative effort, it is derived directly from the sort of scene-and-character shifting that goes on in mince-pie nightmares.

Science fiction is not of that order. It takes a known fact and extends it; or it introduces one new postulate and studies the resultant world. In August 1945, reality introduced to most people one new fact—atomic bombs could be, had been, and would be produced. The next year or two was a science-fiction story in reality; the consequences of the political world accepting that hitherto dismissed notion were—and are still being—played out.

Good science fiction seeks to work out, in fiction, the meanings and probable consequences of new ideas—before the same new ideas slap us in the face as reality. It gives one a chance to duck a little—or at least be prepared. A bucket of cold water is not quite so demoralizingly shocking if you know it's going to be thrown on you.

The question of extrasensory perception—ESP—is one of the things official science, today, dismisses with annoyance. It's nonsense . . . coincidence . . . sheer balderdash . . . exaggerated and mistaken or misstated stories and warped memories of events. Certainly nothing real.

Having gone through that sort of treatment once before with respect to such pseudo-science nonsense as atomic weapons and interplanetary rocketships, I'm a bit less willing to be properly cowed by those Authoritative Scientific Statements. There is a great list of resounding Authoritative Scientific Statements on the books that were spectacularly wrong; there will be even more in the future, for the future is longer than the past.

But the peculiar thing that I ran into, as an editor, was that authors *couldn't* write stories about psi freely! When a highly professional writer—he's been writing for forty-five years, selling in the major fiction markets of the nation—sets out to do a psi story and pulls plotting boners that the average second-story man (in this business that

doesn't mean he's a burglar, just that he's had only one story published) wouldn't pull, something is most peculiar. When an artist, handed a first-rate psi story manuscript to illustrate, turns in a set of three good drawings, *none of which shows the hero*, something is odd.

I let it be known, and known widely in the writing groups, that I wanted good stories using the ESP-psi theme. I got a remarkable collection of anti-psi propaganda!

(To clarify, ESP by definition means "extrasensory perception," which is fine for telepathy, clairvoyance, and the like, replacing *senses*. But it doesn't cover moving objects by mental control, or teleportation—sort of "extramuscular manipulation" rather than "extrasensory perception." "Psi" covers both, "psi" being the Greek letter that stands for the "p-s-y-" in *psy*che, *psy*chic, *psy*chology, and para*psy*chology.)

In the stories I got, wicked men successfully used psi powers for their evil ends, but heroic characters used psi with tragic results. The repeated thesis in literally hundreds of would-be psi stories was a *very* slightly disguised message: "Psi is basically evil and awful and nothing good can come of it and we should stay far, far away from it."

That old Black Magic is at work. Psi is an unknown—as of now. Therefore it is a menace lurking in the darkness beyond the flickering light of the tribal campfire. It is the rustling in the dark, and we must cower from it. Whatever you do, don't look! If you ignore it quietly and cover your head, maybe it will go away—or at least strike somebody else. Maybe.

The only conclusion I've been able to reach is that our culture, in rejecting the irrational and illogical superstitions of old, has established a new sort of fear of the Unknown. Now we're afraid even to think (in a rational, constructive manner) about anything that is outside our present known-and-accepted area. Since psi, and whatever natural laws govern psi, are unknown—they are Taboo. They are Unthinkable.

Now it is permissible to write light fantasies in which we laugh at psi or to discuss it in an outrageous manner

that clearly shows the author doesn't believe it, doesn't expect the reader to believe it, and is sure it's just a joke; but it is *verboten* to discuss psi rationally, meaningfully, or analytically. Then it might be real, and that would be awful.

It would most certainly make an awful change in our way of life! Suppose telepathy were reasonably prevalent —say five percent of all people (that's ten million individuals in the United States alone) were to have telepathic powers. That would be an utterly shattering situation for a culture that is based very largely on hypocrisy and secrecy—hypocrisy of the type that passes laws against gambling, and then pays the Mafia for the privilege of doing what they really want to. Or consider the change that would be imposed on society's morals by a group of clairvoyants who could see anything, anywhere, at any time; consider particularly how such a situation would force people to do what they claimed to believe should be done.

Bridge is a game based on skill in using limited information—you know your own hand, the Dummy hand, and what bids were made. It quite genuinely mimics modern business competition. Could you have a card game if all cards were exposed—as would be the case with a foursome of clairvoyants?

Certainly not bridge; but remember there are other games. Chess, for instance, is a game of high skill in which all the data is fully known. It would be perfectly possible to have a smoothly working, fully honest, open-game society—but it would certainly be different from ours!

And that, of course, is one of the main reasons we don't want Those Weird Powers loose in the world. Such a society is for us the unknown Awful beyond the firelight. We don't easily accept anything that seems to lead to it. We'd rather deny that those things exist at all, or ever could. They're unscientific and evil and . . .

"Modus Vivendi" by Walter Bupp is an effort to consider in a rational, logical manner what the problems would be in integrating those highly useful psi skills into a society that is deadly afraid of them and their possessors.

Mark Clifton's and Alex Apostolides' "What Thin Partitions" and Isaac Asimov's "Belief" present equivalent variations on that exceedingly difficult theme: How do you get someone to accept something he doesn't *want* to know? How do you get people to consider ideas they find disturbing—that they earnestly *want* to be unreal? The more reality the idea evinces, the more desperately they hope and demand that it be unreal, non-existent.

Oh, well—forty years ago the MIT professors were roundly rejecting the "pseudo-science fantasies" about atomic power plants and interplanetary rocketships. This year some of them called a research strike against the inevitable pragmatic results of those now very real "fantasies."

These stories are explorations of the possible consequences and beneficial uses of those "don't even think about it!" ideas.

You may not like them for that reason. But if you have a bit more intellectual courage, you'll find that it's fun to wonder what *is* out there beyond the flicker of the tribal campfire.

Of course, it all depends on how you take them. You can consider, of course, that they're all sheer nonsense anyway.

JOHN W. CAMPBELL

Mountainside, N.J.
October 1969

In light of the fully authenticated cases of complete telepathic communication between twins, a situation such as the one this story is based upon is in the realm of possibility —since it is possible and even logical that a fully developed telepath might be employed for espionage. The startling complications that ensue are deftly developed by Randall Garrett.

THE FOREIGN HAND TIE

by Randall Garrett

FROM ISTANBUL, IN TURKISH THRACE, TO Moscow, U.S.S.R., is only a couple of hours outing for a round trip in a fast jet plane—a shade less than eleven hundred miles in a beeline.

Unfortunately, Mr. Raphael Poe had no way of chartering a bee.

The United States Navy cruiser *Woonsocket,* having made its placid way across the Mediterranean, up the Aegean Sea, and through the Dardanelles to the Bosporous, stopped overnight at Istanbul and then turned around and went back. On the way in, it had stopped at Gibraltar, Barcelona, Marseilles, Genoa, Naples, and Athens—the main friendly ports on the northern side of the Mediterra-

nean. On the way back, it performed the same ritual on the African side of the sea. Its most famous passengers were the American Secretary of State, two senators, and three representatives.

Its most important passenger was Mr. Raphael Poe.

During the voyage in, Mr. Raphael Poe remained locked in a stateroom, all by himself, twiddling his thumbs restlessly and playing endless games of solitaire, making bets with himself on how long it would be before the ship hit the next big wave and wondering how long it would take a man to go nuts in isolation. On the voyage back, he was not aboard the *Woonsocket* at all, and no one missed him because only the captain and two other Navy men had known he was aboard, and they knew that he had been dropped overboard at Istanbul.

The sleek, tapered cylindroid might easily have been mistaken for a Naval torpedo, since it was roughly the same size and shape. Actually, it was a sort of hybrid, combining the torpedo and the two-man submarine that the Japanese had used in World War II, plus refinements contributed by such apparently diverse arts as skindiving, cybernetics, and nucleonics.

Inside this one-man underwater vessel, Raphael Poe lay prone, guiding the little atomic-powered submarine across the Black Sea, past Odessa, and up the Dnieper. The first leg, the four hundred miles from the Bosporous to the mouth of the river, was relatively easy. The two hundred and sixty miles from there to Dnepropetrovsk was a little more difficult, but not terribly so. It became increasingly more difficult as the Dnieper narrowed and became more shallow.

On to Kiev. His course changed at Dnepropetrovsk, from northeast to northwest, for the next two hundred fifty miles. At Kiev, the river changed course again, heading north. Three hundred and fifty miles farther on, at Smolensk, he was heading almost due east.

It had not been an easy trip. At night he had surfaced to get his bearings and to recharge the air tanks. Several times, he had had to take to the land, using the caterpillar treads on the little machine, because of obstacles in the river.

At the end of the ninth day, he was still one hundred eighty miles from Moscow, but, at that point, he got out of the submarine and prepared himself for the trip overland. When he was ready, he pressed a special button on the control panel of the expensive little craft. Immediately, the special robot brain took over. It had recorded the trip upstream; by applying that information in reverse —a "mirror image," so to speak—it began guiding itself back toward Istanbul, applying the necessary corrective factors that made the difference between an upstream and a downstream trip. If it had made a mistake or had been discovered, it would have blown itself to bits. As a tribute to modern robotics and ultramicrominiaturization, it is a fact that the little craft was picked up five days later a few miles from Istanbul by the U.S.S. *Paducah.*

By that time, a certain Vladimir Turenski, a shambling, not-too-bright deaf-mute, had made his fully documented appearance in Moscow.

Spies, like fairies and other such elusive sprites, traditionally come in rings. The reason for this circumstructural metaphor is obscure, but it remains a fact that a single spy, all by himself, is usually of very little use to anybody. Espionage, on any useful scale, requires organization.

There is, as there should be, a reason for this. The purpose of espionage is to gather information—preferably *useful* information—against the wishes of, and in spite of the efforts of, a group—usually referred to as "the enemy"—which is endeavoring to prevent that information from getting into other hands than their own. Such activities obviously imply communication. An espioneur, working for Side A, who finds a bit of important information about Side B, must obviously communicate that bit of information to Side A or it is of no use whatsoever.

All of these factors pose complex problems.

To begin with, the espioneur must get himself into a position in which he can get hold of the information he wants. Usually, that means that he must pass himself off as something he is not, a process which requires time. Then, when he gets the information he is after, he must

get it to his employers quickly. Information, like fish, becomes useless after a certain amount of time, and, unlike fish, there is no known way of refrigerating it to retard spoilage.

It is difficult to transmit information these days. It is actually easier for the espioneur to transmit it than to get it, generally speaking, but it is difficult for him to do both jobs at once, so the spy ring's two major parts consist of the ones who get the information from the enemy and the ones who transmit it back to their employers.

Without magic, it is difficult for a single spy to be of any benefit. And "magic," in this case, can be defined as some method by which information can be either obtained or transmitted without fear of discovery by the enemy. During World War I, a competent spy equipped with a compact transistorized short-wave communications system could have had himself a ball. If the system had included a miniature full-color television camera, he could have gone hog wild. In those days, such equipment would have been magic.

All this is not *à propos* of nothing. Mr. Raphael Poe was, in his own way, a magician.

It is not to be supposed that the United States of America had no spy rings in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at that time. There were plenty of them. Raphael Poe could have, if it were so ordained, availed himself of the services of any one or all of them. He did not do so for two reasons. In the first place, the more people who are in on a secret, the more who can give it away. In other words, a ring, like a chain, is only as strong as its weakest section. In the second place, Raphael Poe didn't need any assistance in the first place.

That is, he needed no more assistance than most magicians do—a shill in the audience. In this particular case, the shill was his brother, Leonard Poe.

Operation Mapcase was as ultrasecret as it could possibly be. Although there were perhaps two dozen men who knew of the existence of the operation by its code name, such as the Naval officers who had helped get Raphael

Poe to his destination, there were only five men who really knew what Operation Mapcase was all about.

Two of these were, of course, Raphael and Leonard Poe. Two others were the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense. The fifth was Colonel Julius T. Spaulding, of United States Army Intelligence.

On the seventh day after Raphael Poe's arrival in Moscow, the other four men met in Blair House, across the street from the White House, in a room especially prepared for the purpose. No one but the President knew the exact purpose of the meeting, although they had an idea that he wanted more information of some kind.

The President himself was the last to arrive. Leaving two Secret Service men standing outside the room, he carefully closed the door and turned to face the Secretary of Defense, Colonel Spaulding, and Leonard Poe. "Sit down, gentlemen," he said, seating himself as he spoke.

"Gentlemen, before we go any further, I must conduct one final experiment in order to justify Operation Mapcase. I will not explain it just yet." He looked at Lenny Poe, a small, dark-haired man with a largish nose. "Mr. Poe, can you contact your brother at this moment?"

Lenny Poe was a man who was not overawed by anyone, and had no inclination to be formal, not even toward the President. "Yeah, sure," he said matter-of-factly.

The President glanced at his watch. "It is now five minutes of ten. That makes it five minutes of six in the evening in Moscow. Is your brother free to move around? That is, can he go to a certain place in the city?"

Lenny closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them. "Rafe says he can go any place that the average citizen would be allowed to go."

"Excellent," said the President. He gave Lenny an address—an intersection of two streets not far from Red Square. "Can he get there within fifteen minutes?"

"Make it twenty," said Lenny.

"Very well. Twenty minutes. When he gets there, I'll ask you to relay further instructions."

Lenny Poe closed his eyes, folded his arms, and relaxed in his chair. The other three men waited silently.

Nineteen minutes later, Lenny opened his eyes and said: "O.K. He's there. Now what?"

"There is a lamppost on that corner, I believe," said the President. "Can your brother see it?"

Lenny closed his eyes again. "Sure. There's a guy leaning against it."

The President's eyes brightened. "Describe him!"

Lenny, eyes still closed, said: "Five feet ten, heavy set, gray hair, dark-rimmed glasses, brown suit, flashy necktie. By the cut of his clothes, I'd say he was either British or American, probably American. Fifty-five or fifty-six years old."

It was obvious to the Secretary of Defense and to Colonel Spaulding that the President was suppressing some inward excitement.

"Very good, Mr. Poe!" he said. "Now, you will find a box of colored pencils and a sketch pad in that desk over there. Can you draw me a fairly accurate sketch of that man?"

"Yeah, sure." Lenny opened his eyes, moved over to the desk, took out the pencils and sketch pad, and went to work. He had to close his eyes occasionally, but his work was incredibly rapid and, at the same time, almost photographically accurate.

As the picture took form, the President's inward excitement increased perceptibly. When it was finally finished, Lenny handed the sketch to the President without a word.

The President took it eagerly and his face broke out in his famous grin. "Excellent! Perfect!" He looked at Lenny. "Your brother hasn't attracted the man's attention in any way, has he?"

"Nope," said Lenny.

"Fine. The experiment is over. Relay my thanks to your brother. He can go ahead with whatever he was doing now."

"I don't quite understand," said the Secretary of Defense.

"I felt it necessary to make one final experiment of my own devising," the President said. "I wanted Raphael Poe to go to a particular place at a particular time, with no advance warning, to transmit a picture of something he

had never seen before. I arranged this test myself, and I am positive that there could be no trickery."

"Never seen before?" the Secretary repeated bewilderedly. He gestured at the sketch. "Why, that's obviously Bill Donovan, of the Moscow delegation. Poe could have seen a photograph of him somewhere before."

"Even so," the President pointed out, "there would be no way of knowing that he would be at that spot. But that's beside the point. Look at that necktie!"

"I had noticed it," the Defense Secretary admitted.

It was certainly an outstanding piece of neckwear. As drawn by Leonard Poe, it was a piece of brilliant chartreuse silk, fully three and a half inches wide at its broadest. Against that background, rose-pink nude girls were cavorting with pale mauve satyrs.

"That tie," said the President, "was sent to me fifteen years ago by one of my constituents, when I was in Congress. I never wore it, of course, but it would have been criminal to have thrown away such a magnificently obscene example of bad taste as that.

"I sent it to Donovan in a sealed diplomatic pouch by special courier, with instructions to wear it at this time. He, of course, has no idea why he is standing there. He is merely obeying orders.

"Gentlemen, this is completely convincing to me. Absolutely no one but myself knew what I had in mind. It would have required telepathy even to cheat.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Poe. Colonel Spaulding, you may proceed with Operation Mapcase as planned."

"Dr. Malekrinova, will you initial these requisition forms, please."

Dr. Sonya Malekrinova, a dowdy-looking, middle-aged woman with unplucked eyebrows and a mole on her chin, adjusted her steel-rimmed glasses, took the proffered papers from the clerk, ran her eyes over them, and then put her initials on the bottom of each page.

"Thank you, Comrade Doctor," said the clerk when she handed back the sheaf of papers.

"Certainly, Comrade."

And the two of them went about their business.

Not far away, in the Cathedral of St. Basil, Vladimir Turenski, alias Raphael Poe, was also apparently going about his business. The cathedral had not seen nor heard the Liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church, or any other church, for a good many decades. The Bolsheviks, in their zeal to protect the citizens of the Soviet Union from the pernicious influence of religion, had converted it into a museum as soon as possible.

It was the function of *Tovarishch* Turenski to push a broom around the floors of the museum, and this he did with great determination and efficiency. He also cleaned windows and polished metalwork when the occasion demanded. He was only one of a large crew of similarly employed men, but he was a favorite with the Head Custodian, who not only felt sorry for the simple-minded deaf-mute, but appreciated the hard work he did. If, on occasion, Comrade Turenski would lean on his broom and fall into a short reverie, it was excusable because he still managed to get all his work done.

Behind Comrade Turenski, a guide was explaining a display to a group of tourists, but Turenski ignored the distraction and kept his mind focused on the thoughts of Dr. Sonya Malekrinova.

After nearly ten months of patient work, Raphael Poe had hit upon something that was, to his way of thinking, more important than all the information he had transmitted to Washington thus far.

Picking brains telepathically was not, even for him, an easy job. He had the knack and the training, but, in addition, there was the necessity of establishing a rapport with the other mind. Since he was a physicist and not a politician, it was much easier to get information from the mind of Sonya Malekrinova than to get it from the Premier. The only person with whom he could keep in contact over any great distance was his brother, and that only because the two of them had grown up together.

He could pick up the strongest thoughts of any nearby person very easily. He did not need to hear the actual words, for instance, of a nearby conversation in order to follow it perfectly, because the words of verbal communication were strong in a person's mind.

But getting deeper than that required an increasing amount of understanding of the functioning of the other person's mind.

His ability to eavesdrop on conversations had been of immense benefit to Washington so far, but it was difficult for him to get close enough to the higher-ups in the Soviet government to get all the data that the President of the United States wanted.

But now that he had established a firm mental linkage with one of the greatest physicists in the Soviet Union, he could begin to send information that would be of tremendous value to the United States.

He brushed up a pile of trash, pushed it into a dust pan, and carried it off toward the disposal chute that led to the trash cans. In the room where the brooms were kept, he paused and closed his eyes.

Lenny! Are you picking this up?

Sure, Rafe. I'm ready with the drawing board anytime you are.

As Dr. Sonya Malekrinova stood in her laboratory looking over the apparatus she was perfecting for the glory of the Soviet State, she had no notion that someone halfway around the world was also looking at it over her shoulder—or rather, through her own eyes.

Lenny started with the fives first, and worked his way up to the larger denominations.

"Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty—forty, fifty, sixty . . ." he muttered happily to himself. "Two fifty, three, three-fifty, four, four-fifty."

It was all there, so he smiled benevolently at the man in the pay window. "Thank you muchly." Then he stepped aside to let another lucky man cash a winning ticket.

His horse had come in at fifteen, six-ten, four-fifty for Straight, Place, and Show, and sixty bucks on the nose had paid off very nicely.

Lenny Poe took out his copy of the *Daily Racing Form* and checked over the listing for the next race.

Hm-m-m, ha. Purse, $7500. Four-year-olds and up: handicap. Seven furlongs. Turf course. Hm-m-m, ha.

Lenny Poe had a passion for throwing his money away on any unpredictable event that would offer him odds. He had, deep down, an artistic soul, but he didn't let that interfere with his desire to lay a bet at the drop of an old fedora.

He had already decided, several hours before, that Ducksoup, in the next race, would win handily and would pay off at something like twenty or twenty-five to one. But he felt it his duty to look one last time at the previous performance record, just to be absolutely positive.

Satisfied, he folded the *Racing Form*, shoved it back into his pocket, and walked over to the fifty-dollar window.

"Gimmie nine tickets on Ducksoup in the seventh," he said, plonking the handful of bills down on the counter.

But before the man behind the window grating could take the money, a huge, hamlike, and rather hairy hand came down on top of his own hand, covering it and the money at the same time.

"Hold it, Lenny," said a voice at the same time.

Lenny jerked his head around to his right and looked up to see a largish man who had "cop" written all over him. Another such individual crowded past Lenny on his left to flash a badge on the man in the betting window, so that he would know that this wasn't a holdup.

"Hey!" said Lenny. His mind was thinking fast. He decided to play his favorite role, that of the indignant Italian. "Whatsa da matta with you, hah? Thisa no a free country? A man gotta no rights?"

"Come on, Mr. Poe," the big man said quietly, "this is important."

"Poe? You outta you mind? Thatsa name of a river——or a raven. I'm a forgetta which. My namesa Manelli!"

"Scusi, signore," the big man said with exaggerated politeness, *"ma se lei è veramente italiano, non è l'uomo che cerchiamo."*

Lenny's Italian was limited to a handful of words. He knew he was trapped, but he faced the situation with aplomb. "Thatsa lie! I was inna Chicago that night!"

"Ah! Cosè credevo. Avanti, saccentone." He jerked his thumb toward the gate. "Let's go."

Lenny muttered something that the big man didn't quite catch.

"What'd you say?"

"Upper United States—the northern United States," Lenny said calmly, shoving his four hundred fifty dollars into his pocket. "That's where Chicago is. Never mind. Come on, boys; back to the drawing board."

The two men escorted Lenny to a big, powerful Lincoln; he climbed into the back seat with the big one while the other one got behind the wheel.

As soon as they had left the racetrack and were well out on the highway, the driver said: "You want to call in, Mario? This traffic is pretty heavy."

The big man beside Lenny leaned forward, over the back of the front seat, unhooked the receiver of the scrambler-equipped radiophone, and sat back down. He thumbed a button on the side of the handset and said: "This is Seven Oh Two." After a short silence, he said: "You can call off the net. You want him brought in?" He listened for a moment. "O.K. Are we cleared through the main gate? O.K. Off."

He leaned forward to replace the receiver, speaking to the driver as he did so. "Straight to the Air Force base. They've got a jet waiting there for him."

He settled back comfortably and looked at Lenny. "You could at least tell people where you're going."

"Very well," said Lenny. He folded his arms, closed his eyes, and relaxed. "Right now, I'm going off to dreamland."

He waited a short while to see if the other would say anything. He didn't, so Lenny proceeded to do exactly what he had promised to do.

He went off to dreamland.

He had not been absolutely sure, when he made the promise, that he would actually do just that, but the odds were in favor of it. It was now one o'clock in the morning in Moscow, and Lenny's brother, Raphael, was a man of regular habits.

Lenny reached out. When he made contact, all he got was a jumble of hash. It was as though someone had made a movie by cutting bits and snippets from a hun-

dred different films, no bit more than six or seven frames long, with a sound track that might or might not match, and projected the result through a drifting fog, using an ever-changing lens that rippled like the surface of a wind-ruffled pool. Sometimes one figure would come into sharp focus for a fraction of a second, sometimes in color, sometimes not.

Sometimes Lenny was merely observing the show, sometimes he was *in* it.

Rafe! Hey, Rafe! Wake up!

The jumble of hash began to stabilize, become more coherent—

Lenny sat behind the fat desk, watching his brother come up the primrose path in a unicycle. He pulled it to a halt in front of the desk, opened the pilot's canopy, threw out a rope ladder, and climbed down. His gait was a little awkward, in spite of the sponge-rubber floor, because of the huge flowered carpetbag he was carrying. A battered top hat sat precariously on his blond, curly hair.

"Lenny! Boy, am I glad to see you! I've got it! The whole trouble is in the wonkler, where the spadulator comes across the trellis grid!" He lifted the carpetbag and sat it down on the lab table. "Connect up the groffle meter! We'll show those pentagon pickles who has the push-and-go here!"

"Rafe," Lenny said gently, "wake up. You're dreaming. You're asleep. I want to talk to you."

"I know." He grinned widely. "And you don't want any back talk from me! Yok-yok-yok! Just wait'll I show you!"

In his hands, he held an object which Lenny did not at first understand. Then Rafe's mind brought it into focus.

"This"—Rafe held it up—"is a rocket motor!"

"Rafe, wake up!" Lenny said.

The surroundings stabilized a little more.

"I will in just a minute, Lenny." Rafe was apologetic. "But let me show you this." It did bear some resemblance to a rocket motor. It was about as *long* as a man's forearm and consisted of a bulbous chamber at one end, which narrowed down into a throat and then widened

into a hornlike exhaust nozzle. The chamber was black; the rest was shiny chrome.

Rafe grasped it by the throat with one hand. The other, he clasped firmly around the combustion chamber. "Watch! Now watch!"

He gave the bulbous, rubbery chamber a hard squeeze—

"SQUAWK!" went the horn.

"Rafe!" Lenny shouted. "Wake up! WAKE UP!"

Rafe blinked as the situation clarified. "What? Just a second, Lenny. Just . . ."

". . . A second."

Raphael Poe blinked his eyes open. The moon was shining through the dirty windows of the dingy little room that was all he could call home—for a while, at least. Outside the window were the gray streets of Moscow.

His brother's thoughts resounded in his fully awake brain. *Rafe! You awake?*

Sure. Sure. What is it?

The conversation that followed was not in words or pictures, but a weird combination of both, plus a strong admixture of linking concepts that were neither.

In essence, Lenny merely reported that he had taken the day off to go to the races and that Colonel Spaulding was evidently upset for some reason. He wondered if Rafe were in any kind of trouble.

No trouble. Everything's fine at this end. But Dr. Malekrinova won't be back on the job until tomorrow afternoon—or, this *afternoon, rather.*

I know, Lenny replied. *That's why I figured I could take time off for a go at the ponies.*

I wonder why they're in such a fuss, then? Rafe thought.

I'll let you know when I find out, Lenny said. *Go back to sleep and don't worry.*

In a small office in the Pentagon, Colonel Julius T. Spaulding cradled the telephone on his desk and looked at the Secretary of Defense. "That was the airfield. Poe will be here shortly. We'll get to the bottom of this pretty quickly."

"I hope so, Julius," the Secretary said heavily. "The President is beginning to think we're both nuts."

The colonel, a lean, nervous man with dark, bushy eyebrows and a mustache to match, rolled his eyes up toward the ceiling. "I'm beginning to agree with him."

The Defense Secretary scowled at him. "What do you mean?"

"Anybody who takes telepathy seriously is considered a nut," said the colonel.

"True," said the Secretary, "but that doesn't mean we *are* nuts."

"Oh, yeah?" The colonel took the cigar out of his mouth and gestured with it. "Anybody who'd do something that convinces all his friends he's nuts must be nuts!"

The Secretary smiled wanly. "I wish you wouldn't be so logical. You almost convince me."

"Don't worry," said the colonel. "I'm not ready to have this room measured for sponge-rubber wallpaper just yet. Operation Mapcase has helped a lot in the past few months, and it will help even more."

"All you have to do is get the bugs out of it," said the Secretary.

"If we did that," Colonel Spaulding said flatly, "the whole operation would fold from lack of personnel."

"Just carry on the best you can," the Secretary said gloomily as he got up to leave. "I'll let you handle it."

"Fine. I'll call you later."

Twenty minutes after the Defense Secretary had gone, Lenny Poe was shown into Colonel Spaulding's office. The agent who had brought him in closed the door gently, leaving him alone with the colonel.

"I told you I'd be back this evening. What were you in such a hurry about?"

"You're supposed to stay in touch," Colonel Spaulding pointed out. "I don't mind your penchant for ponies particularly, but I'd like to know where to find you if I need you."

"I wouldn't mind in the least, Colonel. I'd phone you

every fifteen minutes if that's what you wanted. Except for one thing."

"What's that?"

Lenny jerked a thumb over his shoulder. "Your linguistically talented flatfeet. Did you ever try to get into a floating crap game when you were being followed by a couple of bruisers who look more like cops than cops do?"

"Look, Poe, I can find you plenty of action right here in Washington, if it won't offend your tender sensibilities to shoot crap with a senator or two. Meanwhile, sit down and listen. This is important."

Lenny sat down reluctantly. "O.K. What is it?"

"Dr. Davenport and his crew are unhappy about that last batch of drawings you and I gave 'em."

"What's the matter? Don't they like the color scheme? I never thought scientists had any artistic taste, anyway."

"It's got nothing to do with that. The—"

The phone rang. Colonel Spaulding scooped it up and identified himself. Then: "What? Yeah. All right, send him in."

He hung up and looked back at Lenny. "Davenport. We can get his story firsthand. Just sit there and look important."

Lenny nodded. He knew that Dr. Amadeus Davenport was aware that the source of those drawings was Soviet Russia, but he did not know how they had been obtained. As far as he knew, it was just plain, ordinary spy work.

He came in briskly. He was a tall, intelligent-looking man with a rather craggy face and thoughtful brown eyes. He put a large briefcase on the floor, and, after the preliminaries were over, he came right to the point.

"Colonel Spaulding, I spoke to the Secretary of Defense, and he agreed that perhaps this situation might be cleared up if I talked directly with you."

"I hope so," the colonel said. "Just what is it that seems to be bothering you?"

"These drawings," Davenport said, "don't make any sense. The device they're supposed to represent couldn't do anything. Look, I'll show you."

He took from his briefcase photostatic copies of some

of the drawings Lenny had made. Five of them were straight blueprint-type drawings; the sixth was a copy of Lenny's near-photographic paintings of the device itself.

"This component, here," he said, gesturing at the set of drawings "simply baffles us. We're of the opinion that your agents are known to the Soviet government and have been handed a set of phony plans."

"What's it supposed to do?" Lenny asked.

"We don't know what it's *supposed* to do," the scientist said, "but it's doubtful that it would *actually* do anything." He selected one of the photocopies. "See that thing? The one shaped like the letter Q with an offset tail? According to the specifications, it is supposed to be painted emerald green, but there's no indication of what it is."

Lenny Poe reached out, picked up the photocopy and looked at it. It was—or had been—an exact copy of the drawing that was used by Dr. Sonya Malekrinova. But, whereas the original drawing had been labeled entirely in Cyrillic characters, these labels were now in English.

The drawings made no sense to Lenny at all. They hadn't when he'd made them. His brother was a scientist, but Lenny understood none of it.

"Who translated the Russian into English?" he asked.

"A Mr. Berensky. He's one of our best experts on the subject. I assure you the translations are accurate," Dr. Davenport said.

"But if you don't know what that thing is," the colonel objected, "how can you say the device won't work? Maybe it would if that Q-shaped thing was—"

"I know what you mean," Davenport interrupted. "But that's not the only part of the machine that doesn't make sense."

He went on to explain other discrepancies he had detected in the drawings, but none of it penetrated to Lenny, although Colonel Spaulding seemed to be able to follow the physicist's conversation fairly readily.

"Well, what's your suggestion, Doctor?" the colonel asked at last.

"If your agents could get further data," the physicist said carefully, "it might be of some use. At the same

time, I'd check up on the possibility that your agents are known to the NKVD."

"I'll see what can be done," said the colonel. "Would you mind leaving those copies of the drawings with me for a while?"

"Go right ahead," Davenport said. "One other thing. If we assume this device is genuine, then it must serve some purpose. It might help if we knew what the device is supposed to *do*."

"I'll see what can be done," Colonel Spaulding repeated.

When Davenport had gone, Spaulding looked at Poe. "Got any explanation for that one?"

"No," Lenny admitted. "All I can do is check with Rafe. He won't be awake for a few hours yet. I'll check on it and give you an answer in the morning."

Early next morning, Colonel Spaulding walked through his outer office. He stopped at the desk where the pretty brunette WAC sergeant was typing industriously, leaned across the desk, and gave her his best leer. "How about a date tonight, music lover?" he asked. "*Das Rheingold* is playing tonight. A night at the opera would do you good."

"I'm sorry, sir," she said primly, "you know enlisted women aren't allowed to date officers."

"Make out an application for OCS. I'll sign it."

She smiled at him. "But then I wouldn't have any excuse for turning you down. And then what would my husband say?"

"I'll bribe him. I'll send *him* to OCS."

"He's not eligible. Officers are automatically disqualified."

Colonel Spaulding sighed. "A guy can't win against competition like that. Anything new this morning?"

"Mr. Poe is waiting in your office. Other than that, there's just the routine things."

He went on into his office. Lenny Poe was seated behind the colonel's desk, leaning back in the swivel chair, his feet on the top of the desk. He was sound asleep.

The colonel walked over to the desk, took his cigar

from his mouth, and said: *"Good* morrrning, Colonel Spaulding!"

Lenny snapped awake. "I'm not Colonel Spaulding," he said.

"Then why are you sitting in Colonel Spaulding's chair?"

"I figured if I was asleep nobody'd know the difference." Lenny got up and walked over to one of the other chairs. "These don't lean back comfortably. I can't sleep in 'em."

"You can sleep later. How was your session with Rafe?"

Lenny glowered glumly. "I wish you and Rafe hadn't talked me into this job. It's a strain on the brain. I don't know how he expects anyone to understand all that garbage."

"All what garbage?"

Lenny waved a hand aimlessly. "All this scientific guff. I'm an artist, not a scientist. If Rafe can get me a clear picture of something, I can copy it, but when he tries to explain something scientific, he might as well be thinking in Russian or Old Upper Middle High Martian or something."

"I know," said Colonel Spaulding, looking almost as glum as Lenny. "Did you get anything at all that would help Dr. Davenport figure out what those drawings mean?"

"Rafe says that the translations are all wrong," Lenny said, "but I can't get a clear picture of just what *is* wrong."

Colonel Spaulding thought for a while in silence. Telepathy—at least in so far as the Poe brothers practiced it—certainly had its limitations. Lenny couldn't communicate mentally with anyone except his brother Rafe. Rafe could pick up the thoughts of almost anyone if he happened to be close by, but couldn't communicate over a long distance with anyone but Lenny.

The main trouble lay in the fact that it was apparently impossible to transmit a concept directly from Brain A to Brain B unless the basic building blocks of the concept were already present in Brain B. Raphael Poe, for in-

stance, had spent a long time studying Russian, reading Dostoevski, Tolstoy, and Turgenev in the original tongue, familiarizing himself with modern Russian thought through the courtesy of *Izvestia, Pravda,* and *Krokodil,* and, finally, spending time in the United Nations building and near the Russian embassy in order to be sure that he could understand the mental processes involved.

Now, science has a language of its own. Or, rather, a multiplicity of languages, each derived partly from the native language of the various scientific groups and partly of borrowings from other languages. In the physical sciences especially, the language of mathematics is a further addition.

More than that, the practice of the scientific method automatically induces a thought pattern that is different from the type of thought pattern that occurs in the mind of a person who is not scientifically oriented.

Lenny's mind was a long way from being scientifically oriented. Worse, he was a bigot. He not only didn't know why the light in his room went on when he flipped the switch, he didn't *want* to know. To him, science was just so much flummery, and he didn't want his brain cluttered up with it.

Facts mean nothing to a bigot. He has already made up his mind, and he doesn't intend to have his solid convictions disturbed by anything so unimportant as a contradictory fact. Lenny was of the opinion that all mathematics was arcane gobbledegook, and his precise knowledge of the mathematical odds in poker and dice games didn't abate that opinion one whit. Obviously, a mind like that is utterly incapable of understanding a projected thought of scientific content; such a thought bounces off the impregnable mind shield that the bigot has set up around his little area of bigotry.

Colonel Spaulding had been aware of these circumstances since the inception of Operation Mapcase. Even though he, himself, had never experienced telepathy more than half a dozen times in his life, he had made a study of the subject and was pretty well aware of its limitations. The colonel might have dismissed—as most men do—his own fleeting experiences as "coincidence" or "imagina-

tion" if it had not been for the things he had seen and felt in Africa during World War II. He had only been a captain then, on detached duty with British Intelligence, under crusty old Colonel Sir Cecil Haversham, who didn't believe a word of "all that mystic nonsense." Colonel Haversham had made the mistake of alienating one of the most powerful of the local witch doctors.

The British Government had hushed it all up afterwards, of course, but Spaulding still shuddered when he thought of the broken-spirited, shrunken caricature of his old self that Colonel Haversham had become after he told the witch doctor where to get off.

Spaulding had known that there were weaknesses in the telepathic communication linkage that was the mainspring of Operation Mapcase, but he had thought that they could be overcome by the strengths of the system. Lenny had no blockage whatever against receiving visual patterns and designs. He could reproduce an electronic wiring diagram perfectly because, to him, it was not a grouping of scientific symbols, but a design of lines, angles, and curves.

At first, it is true, he had had a tendency to change them here and there, to make the design balance better, to make it more aesthetically satisfying to his artistic eye, but that tendency had been easily overcome, and Colonel Spaulding was quite certain that that wasn't what was wrong now.

Still—

"Lenny," he said carefully, "are you sure you didn't jigger up those drawings to make 'em look prettier?"

Lenny Poe gave the colonel a look of disgust. "Positive. Rafe checked 'em over every inch of the way as I was drawing them, and he rechecked again last night—or this morning—on those photostats Davenport gave us. That's when he said that there was something wrong with the translations."

"But he couldn't make it clear just what was wrong, eh?"

Lenny shrugged. "How anybody could make any sense out of that gobbledegook is beyond me."

The colonel blew out a cloud of cigar smoke and

looked thoughtfully at the ceiling. As long as the diagrams were just designs on paper, Lenny Poe could pick them up fine. Which meant that everything was jim-dandy as long as the wiring diagrams were labeled in the Cyrillic alphabet. The labels were just more squiggles to be copied as a part of the design.

But if the labels were in English, Lenny's mind would try to "make sense" out of them, and since scientific concepts did *not* "make sense" to him, the labels came out as pure nonsense. In one of his drawings, a lead wire had been labeled "simply ground to powder," and if the original drawing hadn't been handy to check with, it might have taken quite a bit of thought to realize that what was meant was "to power supply ground." Another time, a GE 2N 188A transistor had come out labeled GEZNISSA. There were others—much worse.

Russian characters, on the other hand, didn't have to make any sense to Lenny, so his mind didn't try to force them into a preconceived mold.

Lenny unzipped the leather portfolio he had brought with him—a specially-made carrier that looked somewhat like an oversized brief case.

"Maybe these'll help," he said. "We managed to get two good sketches of the gadget—at least, as much of it as that Russian lady scientist has put together so far. I kind of like the rather abstract effect you get from all those wires snaking in and around, with that green glass tube in the center. Pretty, isn't it?"

"Very," said the colonel without conviction. "I wonder if it will help Davenport any?" He looked at the pictures for several seconds more, then, suddenly, his eyes narrowed. "Lenny—this piece of green glass—the thing's shaped like the letter Q."

"Yeah, sort of. Why?"

"You said it was a tube, but you didn't make it look hollow when you drew it."

"It isn't; it's solid. Does a tube have to be hollow? Yeah, I guess it does, doesn't it? Well, then, it isn't a tube."

Colonel Spaulding picked up the phone and dialed a number.

"Colonel Spaulding here," he said after a moment. "Let me speak to Dr. Davenport." And, after a wait: "This is Colonel Spaulding, Doctor. I think we may have something for you."

"Good morning, Colonel. I'm glad to hear that. What is it?"

"That Q-shaped gadget—the one that you said was supposed to be painted emerald green. Are you *sure* that's the right translation of the Russian?"

"Well . . . uh—" Davenport hesitated. "I can't be sure on my own say-so, of course. *I* don't understand Russian. But I assure you that Mr. Berensky is perfectly reliable."

"Oh, I have no doubt of that," Colonel Spaulding said easily. "But, tell me, does Mr. Berensky know how to read a circuit diagram?"

"He does," Davenport said, somewhat testily. "Of course, he wasn't shown the diagram itself. We had the Russian labels copied, and he translated from a list."

"I had a sneaking suspicion that was it," said Spaulding. "Tell me, Doctor, what does L-E-A-D spell?"

"Lead," said the doctor promptly, pronouncing it *leed*. Then, after a pause, he said: "Or lead," this time pronouncing it *led*. "It would depend on the context."

"Suppose it was on a circuit diagram," the colonel prompted.

"Then it would probably be *leed*. What are you getting at, Colonel?"

"Bear with me. Suppose you had a cable coming from a storage battery, and you wanted to make sure that the cable was reasonably resistant to corrosion, so you order it made out of the metal, lead. It would be a *led lead*, wouldn't it?"

"Um-m-m . . . I suppose so."

"You might get pretty confused if you didn't have a circuit diagram in front of you to tell you what the label was talking about, mightn't you?"

"I see what you mean," the scientist said slowly. "But we can't show those circuit diagrams to Berensky. The Secretary of Defense himself has classified them as Class Triple-A Ultra-Hyper Top Secret. That puts them just

below the Burn-The-Contents-Before-Reading class, and Berensky doesn't have that kind of clearance."

"Then get somebody else," Colonel Spaulding said tiredly. "All you need is a man who can understand technical Russian and can read a circuit schematic and has a top-level secrecy clearance. If we haven't got at least one man in these United States with such simple qualifications as those, then we might as well give the country over to the Reds or back to the Redskins, since our culture is irreprievably doomed." And he lowered the phone gently to its cradle.

"There's no such word as 'irreprievably,'" Lenny pointed out.

"There is now," said Colonel Spaulding.

Raphael Poe moseyed through the streets of Moscow in an apparently aimless manner. The expression on his face was that of a reasonably happy moron.

His aimless manner was only apparent. Actually, he was heading toward the Lenin Soviet People's Higher Research Laboratories. Dr. Sonya Borisovna Malekrinova would be working late this evening, and he wanted to get as close as possible in order to pick up as much information as he could.

Rafe had a great deal of admiration for that woman, he admitted to himself. She was, granted, as plain as an unsalted *matzoh*. No. That was an understatement. If it were possible to die of the uglies, Sonya Borisovna would have been dangerously ill.

Her disposition did nothing to alleviate that drawback. She fancied herself as cold, hard, analytical, and ruthless; actually, she was waspish, arrogant, overbearing, and treacherous. What she considered in herself to be scientific detachment was really an isolation born of fear and distrust of the entire human race.

To her, Communism was a religion; *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto* were holy writ enshrining the dogmata of Marxism-Leninism, and the conflict with the West was a *jehad*, a holy war in which God, in His manifestation as Dialectic Materialism, would naturally win out in the end.

All of which goes to show that a scientific bent, in itself, does not necessarily keep one from being a bigot.

Rafe's admiration for the woman stemmed solely from the fact that, in spite of all the powerful drawbacks that existed in her mind, she was still capable of being a brilliant, if somewhat erratic scientist.

There was a more relaxed air in Moscow these days. The per capita production of the Soviet Union still did not come up to that of the United States, but the recent advances in technology did allow a feeling of accomplishment, and the hard drive for superiority was softened a trifle. It was no longer considered the height of indolence and unpatriotic time-wasting to sit on a bench and feed pigeons. Nor was food so scarce and costly that throwing away a few bread crumbs could be considered sabotage.

So Rafe Poe found himself a quiet corner near the Lenin Soviet People's Laboratories, took out a small bag of dried breadcrumbs, and was soon surrounded by pigeons.

Dr. Malekrinova was carefully calibrating and balancing the electronic circuits that energized and activated and controlled the output of the newly-installed beam generator—a ring of specially-made greenish glass that had a small cylinder of the same glass projecting out at a tangent. Her assistant, Alexis, a man of small scientific ability but a gifted mechanic, worked stolidly with her. It was not an easy job for Alexis; Sonya Borisovna was by no means an easy woman to work with. There was, as there should have been, a fifty-fifty division in all things—a proper state of affairs in a People's Republic. Alexis Andreyevitch did half the physical work, got all the blame when things went wrong, and none of the credit when things went right. Sonya Borisovna got the remaining fifty per cent.

Sonya Borisovna Malekrinova had been pushing herself too hard, and she knew it. But, she told herself, for the glory of the Soviet peoples, the work must go on.

After spending two hours taking down instrument readings, she took the results to her office and began to correlate them.

Have to replace that 140-9.0 micromicrofarad fre-

quency control on stage two with something more sensitive, she thought. *And the field modulation coils require closer adjustment.*

She took off her glasses and rubbed at her tired eyes while she thought. *Perhaps the 25 microfarad, 12 volt electrolytic condenser could be used to feed the pigeons, substituting a breadcrumb capacitor in the sidewalk circuit.*

She opened her eyes suddenly and stared at the blank wall in front of her. "Pigeons?" she said wonderingly. "*Breadcrumb* capacitor? Am I losing my mind? What kind of nonsense is that?"

She looked backed down at at her notes, then replaced her glasses so that she could read them. Determined not to let her mind wander in that erratic fashion again, she returned her attention to the work at hand.

She found herself wondering if it might not be better to chuck the whole job and get out while the getting was good. *The old gal,* she thought, *is actually tapping my mind! She's picking up everything!*

Sonya Borisovna sat bolt upright in her chair, staring at the blank wall again. "Why am I thinking such nonsense?" she said aloud. "And why should I be thinking in English?" When her words registered on her ears, she realized that she was actually *speaking* in English. She was thoroughly acquainted with the language, of course, but it was not normal for her to think in it unless she happened to be conversing with someone in that tongue.

The first whisper of a suspicion began to take form in the mind of Dr. Sonya Borisovna Malekrinova.

Half a block away, Raphael Poe emptied the last of his breadcrumbs on the sidewalk and began walking away. He kept his mind as blank as possible, while his brow broke out in a cold sweat.

"That," said Colonel Julius Spaulding scathingly, "is as pretty a mess as I've seen in years."

"It's a breadboard circuit, I'll admit," Dr. Davenport said defensively, "but it's built according to the schematics you gave us."

"Doctor," said the colonel, "during the war the British

dropped our group a radio transmitter. It was the only way to get the stuff into Africa quickly. The parachute failed to open. The transmitter fell two thousand feet, hit the side of a mountain, and tumbled down another eight hundred feet. When we found it, four days later, its wiring was in better shape than that thing is in now."

"It's quite sufficient to test the operation of the device," Davenport said coldly.

Spaulding had to admit to himself that it probably was. The thing was a slapdash affair—the colonel had a strong feeling that Davenport had assigned the wiring job to an apprentice and given him half an hour to do the job—but the soldering jobs looked tight enough, and the components didn't look as though they'd all been pulled out of the salvage bin. What irritated Colonel Spaulding was Davenport's notion that the whole thing was a waste of time, energy, money, and materials, and, therefore, there was no point in doing a decent job of testing it at all.

He was glad that Davenport didn't know how the information about the device had been transported to the United States. As it was, he considered the drawings a hoax on the part of the Russians; if he had been told that they had been sent telepathically, he would probably have gone into fits of acute exasperation over such idiocy.

The trouble with Davenport was that, since the device didn't make any sense to him, he didn't believe it would function at all.

"Oh, it will do *something*, all right," he'd said once, "but it won't be anything that needs all that apparatus. Look here—" He had pointed toward the schematic. "Where do you think all that energy is going? All you're going to get is a little light, a lot of heat, and a couple of burned out coils. I could do the same job cheaper with a dozen 250 watt light bulbs."

To be perfectly honest with himself, Spaulding had to admit that he wasn't absolutely positive that the device would do anything in particular, either. His own knowledge of electronic circuitry was limited to ham radio experience, and even that was many years out of date. He couldn't be absolutely sure that the specifications for the gadget hadn't been garbled in transmission.

That Q-shaped gizmo, for instance. It had taken the better part of a week for Raphael Poe to transmit the information essential to the construction of that enigmatic bit of glass.

Rafe had had to sit quietly in the privacy of his own room and print out the specifications in Russian, then sit and look at the paper while Lenny copied the "design." Then each paper had to be carefully destroyed, which wasn't easy to do. You don't go around burning papers in a crowded Russian tenement unless you want the people in the next room to wonder what you're up to.

Then the drawings Lenny had made had had to be translated into English and the piece carefully made to specifications.

Now here it was, all hooked up and, presumably, ready for action. Colonel Spaulding fervently hoped there would *be* some action; he didn't like the smug look on Dr. Amadeus Davenport's face.

The device was hooked up on a testing-room circuit and controlled from outside. The operation could be watched through a heavy pane of bulletproof glass. "With all that power going into it," Davenport said, "I don't want anyone to get hurt by spatters of molten metal when those field coils blow."

They went outside to the control console, and Dr. Davenport flipped the energizing switch. After the device had warmed up on low power, Davenport began turning knobs slowly, increasing the power flow. In the testing room, the device just sat there, doing nothing visible, but the meters on the control console showed that something was going on. A greenish glow came from the housing that surrounded the Q-shaped gadget.

"Where the Russians made their mistake in trying to fool anyone with that thing was in their design of that laser component," said Dr. Davenport. "Or, I should say, the thing that is supposed to look like a laser component."

"Laser?" said Colonel Spaulding uncomprehendingly.

"It means 'light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation,'" Davenport explained. "Essentially, a laser

consists of a gas-filled tube or a solid ruby bar with parallel mirrors at both ends. By exciting the atoms from outside, light is generated within the tube, and some of it begins to bounce back and forth between the mirrors at the ends. This tends to have a cascade effect on the atoms which have picked up the energy from outside, so that more and more of the light generated inside the tube tends to be parallel to the length of the tube. One of the mirrors is only partially silvered, and eventually the light bouncing back and forth becomes powerful enough to flash through the half-silvered end, giving a coherent beam of light."

"Maybe that's what this is supposed to be," said the colonel.

Davenport chuckled dryly. "Not a chance. Not with an essentially circular tube that isn't even silvered."

Lenny Poe, the colonel noticed, wasn't the only person around who didn't care whether the thing he referred to as a "tube" was hollow or not.

"Is it doing anything?" Colonel Spaulding asked anxiously, trying to read the meters over Davenport's shoulder.

"It's heating up," Davenport said dryly.

Spaulding looked back at the apparatus. A wisp of smoke was rising slowly from a big coil.

A relay clicked minutely.

WHAP!

For a confused second, everything seemed to happen at once.

But it didn't; there was a definite order to it.

First, a spot of the ceramic tile wall of the room became suddenly red, orange, white hot. Then there was a little crater of incandescent fury, as though a small volcano had erupted in the wall. Following that, there was a sputtering and crackling from the innards of the device itself, and a cloud of smoke arose suddenly, obscuring things in the room. Finally, there was the crash of circuit-breakers as they reacted to the overload from the short circuit.

There was silence for a moment, then the hiss of the automatic fire extinguishers in the testing room as they

poured a cloud of carbon dioxide snow on the smoldering apparatus.

"There," said Davenport with utter satisfaction. "What did I tell you?"

"You didn't tell me this thing was a heat-ray projector," said Colonel Spaulding.

"What are you talking about?" Dr. Davenport said disdainfully.

"Develop the film in those automatic cameras," Spaulding said, "and I'll show you what I'm talking about!"

As far as Colonel Spaulding was concerned, the film showed clearly what had happened. A beam of energy had leaped from the "tail" of the Q-tube, hit the ceramic tile of the wall, and burned its way through in half a second or so. The hole in the wall, surrounded by fused ceramic, was mute evidence of the occurrence of what Spaulding had seen.

But Dr. Davenport pooh-poohed the whole thing. Evidence to the contrary, he was quite certain that no such thing had happened. A piece of hot glass from a broken vacuum tube had done it, he insisted.

A piece of hot glass had burned its way through half an inch of tile? And a wall?

Davenport muttered something about the destructive effects of shaped charges. He was more willing to believe that something as wildly improbable as that had happened than admit that the device had done what Colonel Spaulding was quite certain it had done.

Within three hours, Davenport had three possible explanations of what had happened, each of which required at least four unlikely things to happen coincidentally.

Colonel Spaulding stalked back to his office in a state of angry disgust. Just because the thing was foreign to Davenport's notions, he had effectively tied his own hands—and Colonel Spaulding's, too.

"Where's Lenny Poe?" he asked the WAC sergeant. "I want to talk to him."

She shook her head. "I don't know, sir. Lieutenant Fesner called in half an hour ago. Mr. Poe has eluded them again."

Colonel Spaulding gazed silently at the ceiling for a long moment. Then: "Sergeant Nugget, take a letter. To the President of the United States, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.

"Dear Sir. Consider this my resignation. I have had so much experience with jackasses lately that I have decided to change my name to Hackenbush and become a veterinarian. Yours truly, et cetera. Got that?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant.

"Burn it. When Fumblefingers Fesner and his boys find Lenny Poe again, I want to know immediately."

He stalked on into his office.

Raphael Poe was beginning to feel distinctly uncomfortable. Establishing a close rapport with another mind can be a distinct disadvantage at times. A spy is supposed to get information without giving any; a swapping of information is not at all to his advantage.

It was impossible to keep his mind a perfect blank. What he had to do was keep his strongest surface thoughts entirely on innocuous things. The trouble with that was that it made it extremely difficult to think about some way to get out of the jam he was in. Thinking on two levels at once, while not impossible, required a nicety of control that made wire-walking over Niagara look easy.

The thing to do was to make the surface thoughts automatically repetitive. A song.

"In a hall of strange description
(Antiquarian Egyptian),
Figuring his monthly balance
sheet, a troubled monarch sat
With a frown upon his forehead,
hurling interjections horrid
At the state of his finances, for
his pocketbook was flat."

Simultaneously, he kept a picture in his mind's eye. It had to be something vivid that would be easy to concentrate on. The first thing that came to mind was the bril-

liant necktie that the President had used in his test several months before. He conjured it up in all its chartreuse glory, then he animated it. Mauve satyrs danced with rose-pink nymphs and chased them over the yellow-green landscape.

"Not a solitary single copper cent
had he to jingle
In his pocket, and his architects
had gone off on a strike,
Leaving pyramids unfinished, for
their wages had diminished,
And their credit vanished likewise,
in a way they didn't like."

Rafe could tell that Dr. Malekrinova's mind was trying to reject the alien ideas that were coming into her mind. She wasn't consciously trying to pick up Rafe's thoughts. But the rejection was ineffective because of its fascination. The old business about the horse's tail. If you see a white horse, you'll soon get rich if you can keep from thinking about the horse's tail until it's out of sight. The first thought that comes to mind is: "I mustn't think about the horse's tail." A self-defeating proposition.

If Sonya Borisovna had been certain that she was receiving the thoughts telepathically, she might have been able to reject them. But her mind rejected the idea of telepathy instead, so she was susceptible to the thoughts because she thought they were her own.

The cavorting of the nymphs and satyrs became somewhat obscene, but Rafe didn't bother to correct it. He had more to worry about than offending the rather prim mind of Dr. Malekrinova.

"It was harder for His Royal
Highness than for sons of toil,
For the horny-handed workmen
only ate three figs per day,
While the King liked sweet potatoes,

puddings, pies, and canned tomatoes,
Boneless ham, and Bluepoint
oysters cooked some prehis-
toric way."

What to do now? Should he try to get out of Russia? Was there any quick way out?

He had all the information he needed on the heat-beam projector that Dr. Malekrinova was building. The theory behind it was perfectly clear; all it needed was further experimentation. If it worked out according to theory, it would be an almost perfect defense against even the fastest intercontinental ballistic missiles.

"As he growled, the Royal grumbler
spied a bit of broken tumbler
In a long undusted corner just
behind the chamber door.
When his hungry optics spied it,
he stood silently and eyed it,
Then he smote his thigh with ecstasy
and danced about the floor."

Maybe he should try to make a run for the American Embassy. No. No one there knew him, and they probably couldn't get him out of the country, anyway. Besides, it would take him too long to explain the situation to them.

" 'By the wit Osiris gave me!
This same bit of glass shall save me!
I shall sell it as a diamond at some stupendous price!
And whoe'er I ask to take it,
will find, for his own sweet sake, it
Will be better not to wait until I have to ask him twice!' "

The theory behind the heat projector was simply an extension of the laser theory, plus a few refinements. Inside a ring made of the proper material, the light, acted upon by exterior magnetic fields, tended to move in a circle, so that the photon cascade effect was all in one direction instead of bouncing back and forth between a pair of mir-

rors. That light could be bent around corners by making it travel through a glass rod was well known, and the Malekrinova Q-tube took advantage of that effect.

In a way, the principle was similar to that of the cyclotron, except that instead of spinning ions around in a circle to increase their velocity a beam of coherent light was circulated to increase its intensity.

Then, at the proper moment, a beam of intense coherent light shot out of the tangent that formed the tail of the Q-tube. If the material of the Q was properly constructed and contained atoms that fluoresced strongly in the infra red, you had a heat beam that delivered plenty of power. And, since the radiation was linear and "in step," the Q-tube didn't heat up much at all. The cascade effect took most of the energy out as radiation.

"Then a Royal Proclamation was dispatched throughout the nation,
Most imperatively calling to appear before the King,
Under penalties most cruel, every man who sold a jewel
Or who bought and bartered precious stones, and all that sort of thing."

But knowing all that didn't help Raphael Poe or the United States of America one whit if the information couldn't be gotten out of Russia and into Colonel Spaulding's hands. Lenny had told him of the trouble the colonel was having with Dr. Davenport.

If he could only communicate with Lenny! But if he did, Dr. Malekrinova would pick up every bit of it, and that would be the end of that. No, he had to figure out some way to get himself and the information both out of the country.

Meanwhile, he had to keep thinking of an animated necktie. And he had to keep singing.

"Thereupon, the jewelers' nether joints all quaked and knocked together,
As they packed their Saratogas in lugubrious despair
It was ever their misfortune to be pillaged by extortion,

And they thought they smelled a rodent on the sultry desert air."

Lenny Poe shoved open the door of Colonel Spaulding's outer office with a violence that startled Sergeant Nugget.

"Is Spaulding in?" he barked.

"I think he's expecting you," she said. There was no time to buzz the colonel; Poe was already opening the door.

"Rafe's in trouble!" Lenny said hurriedly, slamming the door behind him.

"Where have you been?" snapped the colonel.

"Never mind that! Rafe's in trouble, I said! We've gotta figure a way to get him out of it!"

Colonel Spaulding dropped all thought of bawling out Poe. "What'd he say? What's the trouble?"

"All he's doing is broadcasting that necktie—like an animated cartoon in technicolor. And he's singing."

"Singing? Singing what?"

"As they faced the Great Propylon, with an apprehensive smile on,
Sculptured there in hieroglyphics six feet wide and nine feet high
Was the threat of King Rameses to chop every man to pieces
Who, when shown the Royal diamond, would dare refuse to buy."

Colonel Spaulding blinked. "That's pretty. What does it mean?"

"Nothing; it's a song, that's all. That female Russian scientist can read Rafe's mind, and he's broadcasting this stuff to cover up!"

Quickly, he told Spaulding what the situation was as he had been able to piece it together from Rafe's secondary thoughts.

"Ye Gods!" Colonel Spaulding slapped at his brow. Then he grabbed for the telephone and started dialing.

Lenny dropped into one of the nearby chairs, closed his eyes, and concentrated.

Rafe! Rafe! Listen to me! Rafe!

"Then the richest dealer, Mulai Hassan, eyed the gem
and coolly
Said, 'The thing is but a common tumbler-bottom,
nothing more!'
Whereupon, the King's Assassin drew his sword, and
Mulai Hassan
Never peddled rings again upon the Nile's primeval
shore."

But below the interference came Rafe's thoughts. And the one thing of primary importance to him was to get the information on the heat-beam generator to the United States.

No bigotry, no matter how strong, is totally impregnable. Even the most narrow-minded racial bigot will make an exception if a person of the despised race risks his own life to save the life of the bigot or someone the bigot loves. The bigotry doesn't collapse—not by a long shot. But an exception is made in that one case.

Lenny Poe made an exception. Any information that was worth his brother's life was *Important!* Therefore, it was not, could not be, scientific gobbledegook, no matter how it sounded.

Rafe, give it to me! Try me! I can copy it!

"Then Abdullah abd Almahdi faintly said the stone was
shoddy,
But he thought that, in a pinch, he might bid fifty
cents himself.
There ensued a slight commotion where he could repent
the notion,
And Abdullah was promoted to the Oriental Shelf."

Rafe! Stop singing that stupid song and give me the stuff! She can't learn anything if you just think about that theory stuff. She already knows that! Come on! Give!

Lenny Poe grabbed a pencil and a sheaf of paper from the colonel's desk and began writing frantically as the *Song of the Egyptian Diamond* stopped suddenly.

Words. Nonsense words. That's all most of the stuff was to Lenny. It didn't matter. He spelled them as he thought they should be, and if he made a mistake, Rafe would correct him.

Rafe tried to keep a picture of the words as they would look if printed while he thought them verbally, and that helped. The information came across in the only way it could come across—not as concepts, but as symbols.

Lenny hardly noticed that the Secretary of Defense and the President had come into the room. He didn't even realize that Colonel Spaulding was feeding him fresh sheets of paper.

Lenny didn't seem to notice the time passing, nor the pain in his hand as the muscles tired. He kept writing. The President left with the Defense Secretary and came back again after a while, but Lenny ignored them.

And when it was over, he pushed pencil and paper aside and, massaging his right hand with his left, sat there with his eyes closed. Then, slowly, a smile spread over his face.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said slowly and softly.

"Mr. Poe," said the President, "is there any danger that your brother will be captured within the next hour?"

Lenny looked up with a startled grin. "Oh. Hi. I didn't notice you, Mr. President. What'd you say?"

The President repeated his question.

"Oh. No. There's nothing to worry about. The little men in white coats came after Dr. Malekrinova. She started screaming that telepathic spies were stealing her secret. She smashed all her apparatus and burned all her papers on top of the wreckage before they could stop her. She keeps shouting about a pink-and-purple orgy and singing a song about glass diamonds and Egyptian kings. I wouldn't say she was actually insane, but she is *very* disturbed."

"Then your brother is safe?"

"As safe as he ever was, Mr. President."

"Thank Heaven for that," said the President. "If they'd ever captured him and made him talk—" He stopped. "I forgot," he said lamely after a moment.

Lenny grinned. "That's all right, Mr. President. I

sometimes forget it myself. But it was his handicap, I guess, that made him concentrate on telepathy, so that he doesn't need his ears to hear what people are saying. Maybe I could read minds the way he does if I'd been born that way.

"Come to think of it, I doubt if the Russians would have believed he was a spy if they'd caught him, unless they really did believe he was telepathic. A physical examination would show immediately that he was born without eardrums and that the inner ear bones are fused. They wouldn't try to make a man talk if an examination showed that he really was a deaf-mute."

The buzzer on the colonel's intercom sounded. "Yes?" said Spaulding.

"Dr. Davenport is here," said Sergeant Nugget. "He wants to talk to you."

"Send him in," said Colonel Spaulding gleefully. "I have a nice scientific theory I want to shove down his throat."

Murray Leinster here writes a story with overtones of World War II, in which he weaves a tapestry of psionic research, mad and sane genius, animal experimentations, and mass hypnotism. For any who may be tempted to send for a correspondence course in controlling people's minds at a distance, this story is especially recommended! Caveat emptor!

THE LEADER

by Murray Leinster

. . . The career of The Leader remains one of the mysteries of history. This man, illegitimate and uneducated, hysterical and superstitious, gathered about him a crowded following of those who had been discontented, but whom he turned into fanatics. Apparently by pure force of personality he seized without resistance the government of one of the world's great nations. So much is unlikely enough. But as the ruler of a civilized country he imposed upon its people the absolute despotism of a primitive sultanate. He honeycombed its society with spies. He imprisoned, tortured, and executed without trial or check. And while all this went on he received the most impassioned loyalty of his subjects! Morality was

abandoned at his command with as much alacrity as common sense. He himself was subject to the grossest superstitions. He listened to astrologers and fortunetellers—and executed them when they foretold disaster. But it is not enough to be amazed at the man himself: The great mystery is that people of the Twentieth Century, trained in science and technically advanced, should join in this orgy of what seems mere madness . . .

Concise History of Europe. Blatsdell.

LETTER FROM PROFESSOR ALBRECHT AIGEN, University of Brunn, to the Herr General Johann von Steppberg (Retired).

My dear General von Steppberg:

It is with reluctance that I intrude upon your retirement, but at the request of the Government I have undertaken a scientific examination of the causes which brought about The Leader's rise to power, the extraordinary popularity of his regime, the impassioned loyalty he was able to evoke, and the astounding final developments.

If you can communicate to me any memories of The Leader which may aid in understanding this most bewildering period of our history, I assure you that it will be appreciated by myself, by the authorities who wish the investigation made, and I dare to hope by posterity.

I am, my dear general, (Et cetera.)

Letter from General Johann von Steppberg (Retired) to Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn.

Herr Professor:

The official yearbooks of the army contain the record of my military career. I have nothing to add to that information. You say the authorities wish more. I refuse it. If they threaten my pension, I will renounce it. If they propose other pressures, I will leave the country. In short, I refuse to discuss in any manner the subject of your recent communication.

I am, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn, Professor of Psychology at University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

I hope your psionic research goes better than my official project! My business goes nowhere! I have written to generals, ministers, and all kinds of persons who held high office under The Leader. Each and every one refuses to discuss The Leader or his own experiences under him. Why? Surely no one would blame them now! We have had to agree to pretend that no one did anything improper under The Leader, or else that what anyone did was proper at the time. So why should the nabobs of that incredible period refuse to discuss what they should know better than anyone else? I am almost reduced to asking the aid of the astrologers and soothsayers The Leader listened to. Actually, I must make a note to do so in sober earnest. At least they had their own viewpoint of events.

Speaking of viewpoints, I have had some hope of clarifying The Leader's career by comparing it with that of Prime Minister Winston, in power in his country when The Leader ruled ours. His career is splendidly documented. There is astonishingly little documentation about The Leader as a person, however. That is one of the difficulties of my task. Even worse, those who should know him best lock their lips while those—

Here is an unsolicited letter from the janitor of a building in which a former Minister of Education now has his law offices. I have many letters equally preposterous . . .

Enclosure in letter to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Herr Professor:

I am the janitor of the building in which Herr Former Minister of Education Werfen has his offices. In cleaning there I saw a letter crumpled into a ball and thrown into a corner. I learned in the time of The Leader that angry actions often mean evil intentions, so I read the letter to see if the police should be notified. It was a letter from you in which you asked Herr Former Minister of Education Werfen for his memories of The Leader.

I remember The Leader, Herr Professor. He was the most holy man who ever lived, if indeed he was only a man. Once I passed the open door of an office in the

building I then worked in. I looked in the door—it was the office of the then-struggling Party The Leader had founded—and I saw The Leader sitting in a chair, thinking. There was golden light about his head, Herr Professor. I have told this to other people and they do not believe me. There were shadowy other beings in the room. I saw, very faintly, great white wings. But the other beings were still because The Leader was thinking and did not wish to be disturbed. I assure you that this is true, Herr Professor. The Leader was the holiest of men—if he was only a man.

I am most respectfully, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Fraulein Lise Grauer, nurse, in the city of Bludenz, to Professor Aigen at Brunn University.

Most respected Herr Professor:

I write this at the request of the Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg, to whom you directed a letter shortly before his death. The Herr Former Police Inspector had been ill for some time. I was his nurse. I had cared for him for months and did many small services for him, such as writing letters at his direction.

When your letter came he read it and went into a black mood of deep and bitter recollection. He would not speak for hours, and I had great difficulty in getting him to take his medicines. Just before his bedtime he called me and said sardonically:

"Lise, write to this Herr Professor for me. Say to him that I was once a decent man. When The Leader took power, I received orders that I would not accept. I submitted my resignation. Then I received orders to come to The Leader. I obeyed these orders because my resignation was not yet accepted. I was received in his office. I entered it with respect and defiance—respect because he was admitted to be the ruler of our nation; defiance because I would not obey such orders as had been sent me in his name.

"The Leader spoke to me, kindly, and as he spoke all my views changed. It suddenly seemed that I had been absurd to refuse the orders sent me. They seemed right and reasonable and even more lenient than would have

been justified. . . . I left The Leader in a state in which I could not possibly fail to do anything he wished. From that moment I obeyed his orders. I was promoted. Eventually, as you know, I was in command of the Neusatz prison camp. And you know what orders I carried out there!"

I wept, Herr Professor, because the Herr Grieg's eyes were terrible to look at. He was a gentle and kindly man, Herr Professor! I was his nurse, and he was a good patient and a good man in every way. I had heard of the things that were done at Neusatz, but I could not believe that my patient had commanded them. Now, in his eyes I saw that he remembered them and that the memory was intolerable. He said very bitterly:

"Tell the Herr Professor that I can tell him nothing more. I have no other memories that would be of service to him. I have resolved, anyhow, to get rid even of these. I have kept them too long. Say to him that his letter has decided me."

I did not understand what he meant, Herr Professor. I helped him prepare for the night, and when he seemed to be resting quietly I retired, myself. I was wakened by a very loud noise. I went to see what was the matter. The Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg had managed to get out of his bed and across the room to a bureau. He opened a drawer and took out a revolver. He made his way back to his bed. He blew out his brains.

I called the police, and after investigation they instructed me to carry out his request, which I do.

Herr Professor, I do not myself remember the times of The Leader, but they must have been very terrible. If the Herr Former Police Inspector Grieg was actually in command of the Neusatz prison camp, and did actually order the things done there,—I cannot understand it, Herr Professor! Because he was a good and kindly man! If you write of him, I beg that you will mention that he was a most amiable man. I was only his nurse, but I assure you — (Et cetera.)

Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn.

My dear friend:

I could have predicted your failure to secure cooperation from eminent figures in The Leader's regime. So long as they keep silent, together, they can pretend to be respectable. And nobody longs so passionately to be respectable as a man who has prospered by being a swine, while he awaits an opportunity to prosper again by more swinishness. I would advise you to expect your best information from little people who suffered most and most helplessly looked on or helped while enormities were committed. Such little people will either yearn over the past like your janitor, or want most passionately to understand so that nothing of the sort can ever happen again.

Winston as a parallel to The Leader? Or as a contrast? Which? I can name one marked contrast. I doubt that anybody really and passionately wishes that Winston had never been born.

You mention my researches. You should see some of our results! I have found a rat with undeniable psychokinetic power. I have seen him move a gram-weight of cheese nearly three centimeters to where he could reach it through the cage bars. I begin to suspect a certain female dog of abilities I would prefer not to name just yet. If you can find any excuse to come to Laibach, I promise you amazing demonstrations of psi phenomena. (Et cetera.)

Quotations from *"Recollections of the Earl of Humber, formerly Prime Minister Winston,"* by the Hon. Charles Wilberforce.

Page 231: ". . . This incredible event took place even while it seemed most impossible. The Prime Minister took it with his usual aplomb. I asked him what he thought of the matter a week later, at a house party in Hertfordshire. He said, 'I consider it most unfortunate. This Leader of theirs is an inherently nasty individual. Therefore he'll make nastiness the avenue to distinction so long as he's in power. The results will be tragic, because when you bottle up decency men seem to go mad. What a pity one can't bottle up nastiness! The world might become a fit place to live in!' "

Page 247: "The Prime Minister disagreed. 'There was Napoleon,' he observed. 'You might despise him, but after he talked to you you served him. He seemed to throw a spell over people. Alexander probably had the same sort of magic personality. When his personality ceased to operate, as a result of too much wine too continuously, his empire fell immediately to pieces. I've known others personally; an Afghan whom I've always thought did us a favor by getting killed by a sniper. He could have caused a great deal of trouble. I'd guess at the Khalifa. Most of the people who have this incredible persuasiveness, however, seem to set up as successful swindlers. What a pity The Leader had no taste for simple crime, and had to go in for crimes of such elaboration!' "

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, University of Brunn, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.
My dear Karl:

You make me curious with your talk of a rat which levitates crumbs of cheese and a she-dog who displays other psi abilities. I assume that you have found the experimental conditions which let psi powers operate without hindrance. I shall hope someday to see and conceivably to understand.

My own affairs are in hopeless confusion. At the moment I am overwhelmed with material about The Leader, the value of which I cannot estimate. Strange! I ask people who should know what I am commissioned to discover, and they refuse to answer. But it becomes known that I ask, and thousands of little people write me to volunteer impassioned details of their experiences while The Leader ruled. Some are bitter because they did what they did and felt as they felt. These seem to believe in magic or demoniac possession as the reason they behaved with such conspicuous insanity. Others gloat over their deeds, which they recount with gusto—and then express pious regret with no great convincingness. Some of these accounts nauseate me. But something utterly abnormal was in operation, somehow, to cause The Leader's ascendancy!

I wish I could select the important data with certainty.

Almost anything, followed up, might reveal the key. But I do not know what to follow! I plan to go to Bozen, where the new monstrous computer has been set up, and see if there is any way in which it could categorize my data and detect a pattern of more than bewildered and resentful frenzy.

On the way back to Brunn I shall stop by to talk to you. There is so much to say! I anticipate much of value from your detached and analytic mind. I confess, also, that I am curious about your research. This she-dog with psi powers, of which you give no account . . . I am intrigued.

As always, I am, (Et cetera.)

•

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, written from The Mathematical Institute at Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

This is in haste. There is much agitation among the computer staff at the Institute. An assistant technician has been discovered to be able to predict the answer the computer will give to problems set up at random. He is one Hans Schweeringen and it is unbelievable.

Various numerals are impressed on the feed-in tape of the computer. Sections of the tape are chosen at random by someone who is blindfolded. They are fed unread into the computer, together with instructions to multiply, subtract, extract roots, et cetera, which are similarly chosen at random and are not known to anyone. Once in twenty times or so, Schweeringen predicts the result of this meaningless computation before the computer has made it. This is incredible! The odds are trillions to one against it! Since nobody knows the sums or instructions given to the computer, it cannot be mind-reading in any form. It must be pure precognition. Do you wish to talk to him?

He is uneasy at the attention he attracts, perhaps because his father was one of The Leader's secretaries and was executed, it is presumed, for knowing too much. Telegraph me if you wish me to try to bring him to you.

Your friend—

Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, Professor of Psychology at Laibach University, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, in care of The Mathematical Institute at Bozen:

Take tapes which produced answers Schweeringen predicted. Run them through computer when he knows nothing of it. Wire result.

Thurn

Telegram. Professor Albrecht Aigen, at The Mathematical Institute in Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

How did you know? The tapes do not give the same answers when run through the computer without Schweeringen's knowledge. The only possible answer is that the computer sometimes errs to match his predictions. But this is more impossible than precognition. This is beyond the conceivable. It cannot be! What now?

Aigen

Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, care Mathematical Institute, Bozen.

Naturally I suspect psi. He belongs with my rat and she-dog. Try to arrange it.

Thurn

Telegram from Professor Albrecht Aigen, Mathematical Institute, Bozen, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Schweeringen refuses further tests. Fears proof he causes malfunctioning of computer will cause unemployment here and may destroy all hope of hoped-for career in mathematics.

Aigen

Telegram from Professor Albrecht Aigen, at Mathematical Institute, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

Terrible news. Riding bus to Institute this morning,

Schweeringen was killed when bus was involved in accident.

Aigen

Telegram from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, care Mathematical Institute, Bozen.

Deeply regret death Schweeringen. When you come here please try to bring all known family history. Psi ability sometimes inherited. Could be tie-in his father's execution and use of psi ability.

Thurn

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen, at Brunn University, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

I have first to thank you for your warm welcome and to express my gratitude for your attention while I was your guest. Since my return I have written many inquiries about Schweeringen's father. There are so far no replies, but I have some hope that people who will not tell of their own experiences may tell about someone else—especially someone now dead. This may be a useful device to get at least some information from people who so far have refused any. Naturally I will pass on to you anything I learn.

I try to work again upon the task assigned me—to investigate the rise and power of The Leader. I find it hard to concentrate. My mind goes back to your laboratory. I am deeply shaken by my experience there. I had thought nothing could be more bewildering than my own work. Consider: Today I received a letter in which a man tells me amazedly of the life he led in a slave-labor camp during the time of The Leader's rule. He describes the attempt of another prisoner to organize a revolt of the prisoners. While he spoke of the brutality of the guards and the intolerably hard labor and the deliberately insufficient food, they cheered him. But when he accused The Leader of having ordered these things—the prisoners fell upon him with cries of fury. They killed him. I had this information verified. It was true.

I cannot hope for a sane explanation of such things. But a sane explanation for my experience seems even less probable. I am impressed by your rat who levitates crumbs of cheese. But I am appalled; I am horrified; I am stupefied by what I did! You asked me to wait for you in a certain laboratory beyond a door. I entered. I saw a small, fat, mangy she-dog in a dog-run She looked at me and wagged her tail. I thereupon went to the other end of the laboratory, opened a box, and took out a handful of strange objects you later told me are sweetmeats to a dog. I gave them to the animal.

Why did I do it? How was it that I went directly to a box of which I knew nothing, opened it as a matter of course, and took out objects I did not even recognize, to give them to that unpleasant small beast? How did I know where to go? Why did I go? Why should I give those then-meaningless objects to the dog? It is as if I were enchanted!

You say that it is a psi phenomenon. The rat causes small objects to move. The dog, you say, causes persons to give it canine candy. I revolt against the conclusion, which I cannot reason away. If you are right, we are at the mercy of our domestic animals! Dog-lovers are not people who love dogs, but people who are enslaved by dogs. Cat-lovers are merely people who have been seized upon by cats to support and pet and cater to them. This is intolerable! I shall fear all pets from now on! I throw myself back into my own work to avoid thinking of it. *I*—

Later. I did not mail this letter because an appalling idea occurred to me. This could bear upon my investigation! Do you think The Leader— No! It could not be! It would be madness . . .

Extract from a letter from Dr. Karl Thurn to Professor Albrecht Aigen.

. . . I deplore your reaction. It has the emotional quality of a reaction to witchcraft or magic, but psi is not witchcraft. It is a natural force. No natural force is either nonexistent or irresistible. No natural force is invariably

effective. Psi is not irresistible under all circumstances. It is not always effective. My rat cannot levitate cheese-crumbs weighing more than 1.7 grams. My she-dog could not make you give her dog-candy once you were on guard. When you went again into the laboratory she looked at you and wagged her tail as before. You say that you thought of the box and of opening it, but you did not. It was not even an effort of will to refrain.

A lesser will or a lower grade of personality cannot overwhelm a greater one. Not ever! Lesser beings can only urge. The astrologers used to say that the stars incline, but they do not compel. The same can be said of psi—or of magnetism or gravitation or what you will. Schweeringen could not make the computer err when it had to err too egregiously. A greater psi ability was needed than he had. A greater psi power than was available would have been needed to make you give the dog candy, once you were warned.

I do not apply these statements to your so-called appalling idea. I carefully refrain from doing so. It is your research, not mine . . .

Extract from letter to Professor Albrecht Aigen from the Herr Friedrich Holm, supervisor of electrical maintenance, municipal electrical service, Untersberg.

Herr Professor:

You have written to ask if I knew a certain Herr Schweeringen, attached to The Leader's personal staff during his regime. I did know such a person. I was then in charge of electrical maintenance in The Leader's various residences. Herr Schweeringen was officially one of The Leader's secretaries, but his actual task was to make predictions for The Leader, like a soothsayer or a medium. He had a very remarkable gift. There were times when it was especially needful that there be no electrical failures—when The Leader was to be in residence, for example. On such occasions it was my custom to ask Herr Schweeringen if there was apt to be any failure of apparatus under my care. At least three times he told me yes. In one case it was an elevator, in another refrigeration, in a third a fuse would blow during a State dinner.

I overhauled the elevator, but it failed nevertheless. I replaced the refrigeration motor, and the new motor failed. In the third case I changed the fuse to a new and tested one, and then placed a new, fused line around the fuse Herr Schweeringen had said would blow, and placed a workman beside it. When the fuse did blow as predicted, my workman instantly closed the extra-line switch, so that the lights of the State dinner barely flickered. But I shudder when I think of the result if Herr Schweeringen had not warned me.

He was executed a few days before the period of confusion began, which ended as everyone knows. I do not know the reason for his execution. It was said, however, that The Leader executed him personally. This, Herr Professor, is all that I know of the matter.

Very respectfully, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Herr Theophrastus Paracelsus Bosche, astrologer, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

Most respected Herr Professor:

I am amused that a so-eminent scientist like yourself should ask information from a so-despised former astrologer to The Leader. It is even more amusing that you ask about a mere soothsayer—a man who displayed an occult gift of prophecy—whom you should consider merely one of the charlatans like myself whom The Leader consulted, and who are unworthy of consideration by a scientific historian. We have no effect upon history, most respected Herr Professor! None at all. Oh, none! I am much diverted.

You ask about the Herr Schweeringen. He was a predictor, using his occult gift of second sight to foreknow events and tell The Leader about them. You will remember that The Leader considered himself to have occult powers of leadership and decision, and that all occult powers should contribute to his greatness. At times of great stress, such as when The Leader demanded ever-increasing concessions from other nations on threat of war, he was especially concerned that occult predictions promise him success.

At a certain time the international tension was greater

than ever before. If The Leader could doubt the rightness of any of his actions, he doubted it then. There was great danger of war. Prime Minister Winston had said flatly that The Leader must withdraw his demands or fight. The Leader was greatly agitated. He demanded my prediction. I considered the stars and predicted discreetly that war would be prevented by some magnificent achievement by The Leader. Truly, if he got out of his then situation it would be a magnificent achievement. But astrology, of course, could only indicate it but not describe what it would be.

The Leader was confident that he could achieve anything he could imagine because he had convinced even himself that only treason or disloyalty could cause him to fail in any matter. He demanded of his generals what achievement would prevent the war. They were not encouraging. He demanded of his civilian political advisers. They dared not advise him to retreat. They offered nothing. He demanded of his occult advisers.

The Herr Schweeringen demanded of me that I tell him my exact prediction. His nerves were bad, then, and he twitched with the strain. Someone had to describe the great achievement The Leader would make. It would be dangerous not to do so. I told him the prediction, I found his predicament diverting. He left me, still twitching and desperately sunk in thought.

I now tell you exact, objective facts, Herr Professor, with no interpretation of my own upon them. The Herr Schweeringen was closeted with The Leader. I am told that his face was shining with confidence when he went to speak to The Leader. It was believed among us charlatans that he considered that he foreknew what The Leader would do to prevent war at this time.

Two hours later there were shots in The Leader's private quarters. The Leader came out, his eyes glaring, and ordered Herr Schweeringen's body removed. He ordered the execution of the four senior generals of the General Staff, the Minister of Police, and several other persons. He then went into seclusion, from which he emerged only briefly to give orders making the unthinkable retreat that Prime Minister Winston had demanded. No one spoke to

him for a week. Confusion began. These are objective facts. I now add one small boast.

My discreet prediction had come true, and it is extremely diverting to think about it. The Leader had achieved magnificently. The war was prevented not only for the moment but for later times, too. The Leader's achievement was the destruction of his regime by destroying the brains that had made it operate!

It is quite possible that you will consider this information a lie. That will be quite droll. However, I am, most respected Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

My dear friend:

Your information about the elder Schweeringen received. The information about his prediction is interesting. I could wish that it were complete, but that would seem to be hopeless. Your question, asked in a manner suggesting great disturbance, is another matter. I will answer it as well as I can, my friend, but please remember that you asked. I volunteer nothing. The question of the rise and power of The Leader is your research, not mine.

Here is my answer. Years back an American researcher named Rhine obtained seemingly conclusive proof that telepathy took place. Tonight he would have a "sender," here, attempt to transmit some item telepathically to a "receiver," there. Tomorrow morning he would compare the record of what the "sender" had attempted to transmit, with the record of what the "receiver" considered he had received. The correspondence was far greater than chance. He considered that telepathy was proven.

But then Rhine made tests for precognition. He secured proof that some persons could predict with greater-than-probability frequency that some particular event, to be determined by chance, would take place tomorrow. He secured excellent evidence for precognition.

Then it was realized that if one could foresee what dice would read tomorrow—dice not yet thrown—one should be able to read what a report would read tomorrow—a

report not yet written. In short, if one can foreknow what a comparison will reveal, telepathy before the comparison is unproven. In proving precognition, he had destroyed his evidence for telepathy.

It appears that something similar has happened, which our correspondence has brought out. Young Schweeringen predicted what a computer would report from unknown numerals and instructions. In order for the computer to match his predictions, it had to err. It did. Therefore one reasons that he did not predict what the computer would produce. The computer produced what he predicted. In effect, what appeared to be foreknowledge was psychokinesis—the same phenomenon as the movement of crumbs of cheese by my rat. One may strongly suspect that when young Herr Schweeringen knew in *advance* what the computer would say, he actually knew in advance what he could make it say. It is possible that one can consciously know in advance only what one can unconsciously bring about. If one can bring about only minor happenings, one can never predict great ones.

This is my answer to your question. I would like very much to know what the elder Schweeringen predicted that The Leader would accomplish!

My she-dog has died. We had a new attendant in the laboratory. He fed her to excess. She died of it. (Et cetera.)

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

My dear Karl: . "

I have resolved to dismiss psionic ability from my investigation into The Leader's rise to power. This much I will concede: The Leader could enslave—englamour —enchant anyone who met him personally. He did. To a lesser degree, this irresistible persuasiveness is a characteristic of many successful swindlers. But he could not have englamoured the whole nation. He did not meet enough persons personally to make his regime possible, unless he could cause other persons to apply their own magnetism to further his ambitions, and they others and

others and so on—like an endless series of magnets magnetized originally from one. This is not possible. I restrict myself to normal, plausible hypotheses—of which so far I have no faintest trace.

You agree with me, do you not, that it was impossible for The Leader to weave a web of enchantment over the whole nation by his own psi energies controlling the psi energies of others? I would welcome your assurance that it could not be.

Letter from Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

My dear Karl:

Did you receive my last letter? I am anxious to have your assurance that it was impossible that The Leader could englamour the whole nation by his psionic gifts.

Telegram, Dr. Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

Karl, as you are my friend, answer me!

Letter, Dr. Karl Thurn to Professor Albrecht Aigen.

. . . But what have you discovered, my friend, that you are afraid to face?

Letter, Professor Albrecht Aigen to Dr. Karl Thurn.

My dear Karl:

I appeal to you because I have discovered how nearly our nation and the whole world escaped horrors beside which those of The Leader's actual regime would seem trivial. Give me reasons, arguments, proofs beyond question, which I can put into my report on his career! I must demonstrate beyond question that psi ability did not cause his ascendancy! Help me to contrive a lie which will keep anyone, ever, from dreaming that psi ability can be used to seize a government and a nation. It could seize the world more terribly . . .

I cannot express the urgency of this need! There are others who possess The Leader's powers in a lesser degree. They must remain only swindlers and such, without ambitions to rule, or they might study The Leader's career as Napoleon studied Alexander's. There must be no

hint, anywhere, of the secret I have discovered. There must be nothing to lead to the least thought of it! The Leader could have multiplied his power ten-thousand-fold! Another like him must never learn how it could be done!

I beg your help, Karl! I am shaken. I am terrified. I wish that I had not undertaken this research. I wish it almost as desperately as I wish that The Leader had never been born!

Letter from Colonel Sigmund Knoeller, retired, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

Herr Professor:

In response to your authorized request for information about certain events; I have the honor to inform you that at the time you mention I was Major in command of the Second Battalion of the 161st Infantry Regiment, assigned to guard duty about the residence of The Leader. Actual guard duty was performed by the secret police. My battalion merely provided sentries around the perimeter of the residence, and at certain places within.

On August 19th I received a command to march three companies of my men into the residence, to receive orders from The Leader in person. This command was issued by the Herr General Breyer, attached to The Leader as a military aide.

I led my men inside according to the orders, guided by the orderly who had brought them. I entered an inner courtyard. There was disturbance. People moved about in a disorderly fashion and chattered agitatedly. This was astonishing in The Leader's residence. I marched up to General Breyer, who stood outside a group biting his nails. I saluted and said: "Major Knoeller reporting for orders, Herr General."

There was then confusion in the nearby squabbling group. A man burst out of it and waved his arms at me. He looked like The Leader. He cried shrilly:

"Arrest these men! All of them! Then shoot them!"

I looked at the Herr General Breyer. He bit his nails. The man who looked so much like The Leader foamed at the mouth. But he was not The Leader. That is, in every

respect he resembled The Leader to whom I owed loyalty as did everyone. But no one who was ever in The Leader's presence failed to know it. There was a feeling. One knew to the inmost part of one's soul that he was The Leader who must be reverenced and obeyed. But one did not feel that way about this man, though he resembled The Leader so strongly.

"Arrest them!" shrilled the man ferociously. "I command it! I am The Leader! Shoot them!"

When I still waited for General Breyer to give me orders, the man shrieked at the troopers. He commanded them to kill General Breyer and all the rest, including me. And if he had been The Leader they would have obeyed. But he was not. So my men stood stiffly at attention, waiting for my orders or General Breyer's.

There was now complete silence in the courtyard. The formerly squabbling men watched as if astonished. As if they did not believe their eyes. But I waited for General Breyer to give his commands.

The man screamed in a terrible, frustrated rage. He waved his arms wildly. He foamed at the mouth and shrieked at me. I waited for orders from General Breyer. After a long time he ceased to bite his nails and said in a strange voice:

"You had better have this man placed in confinement, Major Knoeller. See that he is not injured. Double all guards and mount machine guns in case of rioting outside. Dismiss!"

I obeyed my commands. My men took the struggling, still-shrieking man and put him in a cell in the guardhouse. There was a drunken private there, awaiting court-martial. He was roused and annoyed when his new companion shrieked and screamed and shook the bars of the door. He kicked the man who looked so much like The Leader. I then had the civilian placed in a separate cell, but he continued to rave incoherently until I had the regimental surgeon give him an injection to quiet him. He sank into drugged sleep with foam about his lips.

He looked remarkably like The Leader. I have never seen such a resemblance! But he was not The Leader or we would have known him.

There was no disturbance outside the residence The doubled guards and the mounted machine guns were not needed.

I am, Herr Professor, (Et cetera.)

Letter, with enclosure, from Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University, to Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach.

My dear Karl:

Because of past sharing in my research, you will realize what the enclosed means. It is part of the report of the physicians who examined The Leader three days after his confinement in a military prison. He had recovered much of his self-control. He spoke with precision. He appeared even calm, though he was confused in some matters. The doctors addressed him as "My Leader" because he refused to reply otherwise.

(Enclosure)

Dr. Kundmann: But, My Leader, we do not understand what has happened! You were terribly disturbed. You were even . . . even confused in your behavior! Can you tell us what took place?

The Leader: I suffered a great danger and a temporary damage. That villain Schweeringen—I shot him. It was a mistake. I should have had him worked over—at length!

Dr. Messner: My Leader, will you be so good as to tell us the nature of the danger and the damage?

The Leader: Schweeringen probably told someone what he would propose to me. It was his conviction that because of my special gifts I could cause anyone, not only to obey me, but to pour out to me, directly, his inmost thoughts and memories. Of course this is true. The danger was that of the contact of my mind with an inferior one. But I allowed Schweeringen to persuade me that I should risk even this for the service of my people. Therefore I contacted the mind of Prime Minister Winston, so I could know every scheme and every plan he might have or know to exist to injure my people. I intended, however, to cause him to become loyal to me—though I would later have had him shot. Schweeringen had be-

trayed me, though. When I made contact with Winston's mind, it was not only inferior, but diseased! There was a contagion which temporarily affected the delicate balance of my intuition. For a short time I could not know, as ordinarily, what was best for my people.

(End of Enclosure)

You will see, my dear Karl, what took place. To you and to me this explains everything. In the background of my research and your information it is clear. Fortunately, The Leader's mind was unstable. The strain and shock of so unparalleled an experience as complete knowledge of another brain's contents destroyed his rationality. He became insane. Insane, he no longer had the psi gifts by which he had seized and degraded our nation. He ceased to be The Leader.

But you will see that this must be hidden! Another monster like The Leader, or Napoleon—perhaps even lesser monsters—could attempt the same feat. But they might be less unstable! They might be able to invade the mind of any human being, anywhere, and drain it of any secret or impress upon it any desire or command, however revolting. You see, Karl, why this must never become known! It must be hidden forever.

Letter from Dr. Karl Thurn, University of Laibach, to Professor Albrecht Aigen, Brunn University.

My dear friend:

I am relieved! I feared for your judgment. I thought that perhaps overwork and frustration had set up an anxiety-block to make you cease your work. But you are quite right. Your analysis is brilliant. And now that you have pointed it out, unquestionably a man with The Leader's psi powers could force another man's brain to transmit all its contents to him.

But consider the consequences! Consider the conditions of such an event. One's brain is designed to work within one's own skull, dealing with sensory messages and the like. Very occasionally it acts outside, shifting crumbs of cheese and confusing computers—and securing candy. But even when one's will controls outside actions, it does

not fuse with the outside brain or thing. It molds or moves the recipient mind, but there is never a sharing of memory. You have explained why.

Consider what must happen if a brain of limited power and essentially emotional operation is linked to another and more powerful one. Assume for a moment that my she-dog had linked her brain to yours, even momentarily. Do you realize that she would not have gotten your memories, much less your power to reason? She would not even have acquired your knowledge of the meaning of words! When a bright light shines in your eyes, you see nothing else. When thunder rolls in your ears, you do not hear the ticking of a clock. When you suffer pain, you do not notice a feather's tickle. If my she-dog had linked her mind to yours, she would have experienced something which is knowledge more firmly fixed and more continuously known than anything else in your conscious life. This overwhelmingly strong conviction would have been so powerful and so positive that it would be imprinted—branded—burned into every cell of her brain. She could never get it out.

But in receiving this overwhelming experience she would not get your memories or power to reason or even your personality. She would have experienced only your identity. She would have received only the conviction that she was yourself! She would have been like those poor lunatics who believe that they are Napoleon, though they have nothing of Napoleon in them but the conviction of identity. They do not know when he was born or have more than the vaguest notion of what he did, but they try to act as who he was—according to their own ideas of how Napoleon would act in their situation. This is how my she-dog would have behaved.

I am relieved. You have explained everything. Your letter gave me the suspicion. I secured a transcript of the Herr Doctor's report for myself. My suspicion became a certainty. You will find the clue in the report. Consider: The Leader had had the experience I imagined for my she-dog. He had linked his mind with a stronger one and a greater personality—if it must be said, a greater man. For a moment The Leader knew what that man knew

most certainly, with most profound conviction, with most positive knowledge. It was burned into his brain. He could never get it out. He did not secure that other man's memories or knowledge or ability. He was blinded, deafened, dazed by the overwhelming conviction that the other man had of his own identity. It would not be possible for him to get anything else from a stronger mind and a greater person. Nor could anyone else succeed where he failed, my friend! There is no danger of any man seizing the world by seizing the minds of all his fellows! One who tries will meet the fate of The Leader.

You realize what that fate was, of course. He suddenly ceased to be the monster who could cast a spell of blind adoration for himself. He ceased to be The Leader! So the doctors gave him truth-serum so he would not try to conceal anything from them. The result is in the transcript on the third page beyond the place you quoted to me. There the doctors asked The Leader who he was. Read his answer, my friend! It proves everything! He said:

"I am Prime Minister Winston."

"What Thin Partitions" explores the possibilities of the application of psychokinetic principles and abilities in industry—and the possibility that there exists a viable framework other than the framework of the "real" world.

WHAT THIN PARTITIONS

by Mark Clifton and Alex Apostolides

Remembrance and reflection, how allied;
What thin partitions sense from thought divide.

—Pope

EVEN AFTER FOUR YEARS, THE CHANGING OF the shifts at Computer Research, Inc., fascinated me. Perhaps it was because the plant had grown so fast, fed by the steadily increasing government orders. Perhaps it was seeing the long line of windowless buildings across the grassy square suddenly boil at their base as two thousand employees surged in and out at the sound of the shift bell.

Could be, as personnel director, I liked to speculate on which of those intent or laughing faces would suddenly cease to be an abstract problem and become a real one. Or the other way around; could be I liked to get away from the pile of reports on my desk, and just remind my-

self by looking at all these people that there could be even more problems than there were.

There could be problems I had never faced before. Could be there were things behind those faces streaming past my window of which I'd never dreamed. I found myself staring even more intently at the faces, trying to catch a glimpse of such possibilities. But, then, how could we recognize something of which we've never even dreamed?

"Is your intercom signal out of order, Mr. Kennedy?" my secretary's voice broke in on my reflections. I turned from the window and looked at her with a start. She was standing in the doorway with that half accusing and half understanding look on her face, so characteristic of her.

"I suppose I just didn't hear it, Sara," I answered. "Or didn't want to hear it," I amended, being honest with her. "What is it this time?"

"A termination," she answered. "P-1, Assembler. Annie Malasek."

I sighed and walked over to my desk. I wasn't in much of a mood to go into my act; it was late in the afternoon and I felt I'd done my day's work already. But it was my job to keep any employee who rated P-1, Production Very Top Class, from leaving us if it were possible. There weren't many who ever got that good, and the few who did were too valuable to entrust to the assistants, interviewers, and counselors in the outer offices.

"O.K., Sara," I agreed. "Send her in."

Sara turned away from my door, and I picked up some papers from my desk and began looking at them. I was above making employees stand and wait while I pretended to be busy; that was a little man's trick. But I wasn't above pretending I was glad to interrupt important work just for them. It was a part of my act which worked —sometimes.

It didn't seem to have much effect on Annie, however. She just stood there in my doorway looking hostile.

"All I want is my check," she said with emphasis.

I smiled a little more and indicated the crying chair with my eyes. She didn't obey my unspoken request. So I spoke it. She still hesitated in the doorway, her training to

obedience battling with her independence. Independence won, temporarily.

"All I want is my check," she repeated, and then made the expected mistake. "I ain't here to make trouble for nobody."

"Is that the reputation I've got over in the plant, Mrs. Malasek?" I asked softly, putting the right amount of rue-fulness in my voice, shrugging my shoulders a little bitterly. "That nobody wants to talk to me because I'll make trouble?"

It caught her off base, of course, as I'd intended. "No sir," she said hastily, "I didn't mean that."

"Then suppose you sit down," I said firmly, "and tell me what the trouble is." This time obedience won, naturally. She sat down on the edge of the chair and leaned forward. She wasn't committing herself completely, not until she'd got her anger off her chest. They never do. They steam themselves up for days or weeks, and you've got to turn the right pet cocks and let the steam escape gradually, or else they'll blow their top.

She started in with a lot of trivialities and I let her run on for a while. They seldom tell you what's really bothering them—it's too close to them, they're afraid you'll think it is silly. That's where most counselors fall down. They take these surface complaints as being the real issues, and waste all their effort striking at shadows.

"What's really bothering you, Annie?" I asked after a time. I gave her that look which says, "These things you've been talking about are all right to tell other people, but you and I, we know . . ."

It caught her off base again. As usual, she hadn't intended to tell me the real trouble. And now she had to. She sat back a little into the crying chair, an unconscious admission that I'd won. Two large crystal tears began forming in her black eyes and began to run down her leathery cheeks.

Without making a production out of it, I opened my top drawer and took a clean handkerchief from the stack. I shoved it across the desk at her, without appearing to notice what I was doing. Without appearing to notice

what she was doing, she picked it up and dabbed at her cheeks.

"It's about Jennie," she said after a moment's hesitation. She wasn't sobbing. It was just that the tears kept welling up and starting to run down her cheeks before she remembered to wipe them away.

"Jennie?" I prompted.

"My kid," she answered. "She don't get along with the other kids in your nursery."

I winced inwardly as she identified the plant nursery as my personal project. It was. And it was a sore spot, maybe a mistake. I hadn't thought it out very far. It seemed like such a good idea to make provision for care of the small children right there at the plant. But it's one thing to handle employees. It's something else entirely to start handling their children—and do it successfully.

"The teachers neither," she said, and this time her hostility flared up, hotter than ever. Unreason took over again. "I want my check, and then I'm going to march straight down to the Industrial Welfare Commission. They'd be very interested in certain things about certain teachers and certain foremen—"

"What did the teachers do?" I interrupted in a casual tone, just as if her threat to call in the IWC weren't a real one. Once those lovely theorists who learned sociology from a book written by a sociologist who learned things from a book written by—

"They lie about my little Jennie," Annie answered hotly. But her eyes showed she wasn't too sure they were lying. Too plainly they showed dread, uncertainty, guilt, fear.

I picked up my pencil and began twirling it in my fingers. I wasn't ready for her to realize I had looked into her eyes. She had to go through her defensive pattern first, get it out of her system. I kept my eyes on the pencil.

"What kind of lies?" I asked.

"They say I got to take Jennie outta the nursery," she said, her eyes glaring anger. "They say my Jennie ain't good enough to be with other kids."

I knew the teachers in the nursery well. I'd picked

them. Considering the jobs they had, they were pretty nice gals. Reasonably practical, too, considering they had degrees in education that were exceptional.

"What do they really say, Annie?" I asked quietly.

"They say they can't manage Jennie," she answered truculently. "They say she throws things." We were getting down to bedrock now. A fond mother defending a spoiled brat, a little monster sweet only to mother's eyes.

"And does she?" I asked, and was so far off the beam I wasn't even braced for the answer.

"She can't help it if things just fly through the air when she gets mad," Annie said defensively. "They always gripe over there because fires start around her. I just get burned up, Mr. Kennedy, when I think about it. She can't help it if she starts fires. Anyway, they're only little ones that really don't hurt anyone."

I kept quiet.

"She don't start the fires because she don't have no matches," Annie said with determined logic. "How could she start fires without no matches?"

"Did it ever happen at home?" I asked.

Annie dropped her eyes and began to twist her fingers around one another in her lap.

"Lately," she said almost soundlessly. "That's why I brought her down to the nursery here. She was all alone in the room we rent. I got nobody but her, nobody to look out for her. I got to work hard all the time."

I had a sudden vision of the stark barrenness of this woman's life. Husband gone, or maybe never had one. Neighbors with their nasty little suspicions kept in a roiling turmoil these days by world conditions, delighting in relieving the monotony of their lives by dark looks, remarks they'd know she'd overhear. A small child, locked in a bare room all day, not playing with the other children, a mother coming home at night too tired to more than feed her.

The picture was all too clear, and nagging somewhere at the back of my mind was a series of case histories of children with similar environments.

"Annie," I said suddenly, "let me look into it. Let me

talk to the teachers, get their side of the story. And I'd like to talk to Jennie too, if you don't mind."

The tears welled up faster now, flowed in a steady stream. She dabbed at her eyes and blew her nose with a loud honk. A part of my mind registered that Sara would hear the honk and interpret it as the signal to get the next interview ready. This one was over. The problem had been transferred from the employee to me, as usual. Only this time I wasn't sure yet what the problem was, or whether I could handle it.

"Now suppose you go on over to work, Annie," I said, "and forget about this quitting business. There'll be time to do that later, if I can't help you."

She stood up now and walked toward the door. "I'll get a demerit for being absent from my bench too long," she said, as she put her hand on the door. "I've got a P-1 rating. I don't want no demerits." There didn't seem to be much distinction in her mind between her big problems and her little ones.

"I'll sign a slip to your foreman," I agreed, and pulled a pad toward me. Of course I knew the foreman saved these excuse slips to flourish as an alibi when their production slumped; but I'd fight that battle out, as usual, at the next management conference.

Annie walked out the door, holding the white slip aloft as if it were a prize of some sort. Sara stood silently in the doorway until the outer door had closed.

"You took nine minutes on that beef," she said. "You're slipping."

"The union prefers we call them grievances," I said loftily.

"Well, there's another beef waiting," she said pointedly. "And this time it's a beef, because it's one of the scientists, Dr. Auerbach, not a union member."

"No, Sara," I said with exaggerated patience, just as if she weren't the best secretary I'd ever had. "That isn't a beef either. With scientists it's nothing less than a conflict problem. We don't have beefs here at Computer Research."

"Some day I'm going to have just a good old-fashioned beef," Sara said dreamily, "just for the novelty of seeing

what it's like to be a human being instead of a personnel secretary."

"Well while you're trying to work yourself into it, get me little Jennie Malasek out of the nursery," I said dryly.

"It's not enough," she answered tartly, "that you should twist us intelligent, mature adults around your little finger. Now you got to start picking on the little kids."

"Or vice versa," I answered with a sigh. "I don't know which, yet. Send in Dr. Auerbach, and have Jennie waiting. I want to go home sometime tonight. I, too, am human."

"I doubt it," she said, and without closing the door, signaled the receptionist to let in Dr. Auerbach.

Dr. Karl Auerbach walked in with the usual attitude of the technical man; a sort of zoo keeper walking into a den of snakes attitude, determined but cautious. I waved him to the crying chair and refrained from reassuring him that it would not clamp down upon him and start measuring his reflexes.

He was tall, thin, probably not past forty, a little gray at the temples, professionally handsome enough to mislead a television audience into thinking he was a medical doctor on a patent nostrum commercial. In his chemically stained fingers he held a plastic cylinder, oh maybe four inches long by two in diameter. He carried it with both care and nonchalance, as if it were nitroglycerine he just happened to have with him.

"I understand a personnel director handles employee problems of vocational adjustment," he stated carefully after he had seated himself.

I gave him a grave nod to indicate the correctness of his assumption.

"I assume it is handled on an ethically confidential basis," he pursued his pattern faithfully.

Again I nodded, and this time slowly closed my eyes to indicate assent.

"I am unacquainted with how much an employee tells you may remain off the record, and how much your position as company representative requires you place on the record." He was scouting the essential area to determine precisely where he stood.

"The company is liberal," I stated in the hesitant, pedantic tones so approved by technical men. "Everything is off the record until we have the problem with its ramifications. Then . . . ah . . . by mutual agreement, we determine what must be placed on the record."

Apparently it won his confidence. Well, there was no difference between the learned and the unlearned. Each approaches an unknown with extreme caution. Each takes about the same length of time under skilled handling to get to the point. Each throws up a lot of false dummies and loses confidence if you concern yourself with them. Learned or illiterate, anger is anger; frustration is frustration. A problem is a problem, with the complexity of it purely a relative thing. To each is given problems slightly beyond his capacity to handle them adequately.

"I find myself frustrated," he stated flatly.

I still had a long way to go, for that's nothing new. Who isn't?

Slowly and carefully, disposing of each point as it arose, we threaded our way into the snakepit. The essential facts were that he had been employed as a research chemist, placed under Dr. Boulton, head of the experimental department. This, I knew. Instead of being permitted to do the research chemistry for which he had been employed, he had been kept on routine problems which any high school boy could do.

This I doubted, but recognized it as the stock complaint of every experimental research man in industry.

Dr. Boulton was approaching the cybernetics problem on a purely mechanical basis which was all wrong. I began to get interested. Dr. Auerbach had discussed with Dr. Boulton the advisability of a chemical approach to cybernetics. I began to get excited. Dr. Boulton had refused to consider it. Apparently he had *not* been excited.

I knew Dr. Boulton pretty well. As heads of our respective departments we sat in on the same management conferences. We were not particularly friendly. He regarded psychology and all applications of it with more than a little distrust. But more important, I had for a long time sensed a peculiar tension in him—that he was deter-

mined to keep human thought processes mysterious, determined not to see more than a narrow band of correlation between the human mind and a cybernetic machine. I had already determined that Dr. Boulton would outlive his usefulness to us.

"And how would you approach the problem chemically?" I asked Dr. Auerbach.

We had more discussion in which I proved to him that I was top security cleared, that my chemistry was sadly lacking and he would have to speak as though to a layman, that indeed he was not going over his superior's head in discussing it with me, that there was a possibility I might assist if I became convinced enough to convince general management a separate department should be set up. And finally he began to answer my question.

"Let us take linseed oil as a crude example," he said, and waved my offer of a cigarette aside. "Linseed oil, crudely, displays much of the same phenomena as the human mind. It learns, it remembers, it forgets, it relearns, it becomes inhibited, it becomes stimulated."

I don't usually sit with my mouth hanging open, and became conscious of it when I tried to draw on my cigarette without closing my lips.

"Place an open vessel of linseed oil in the light," he instructed, and touched the tips of his two index fingers together, "and in about twenty-four hours it will begin to oxidize. It continues oxidation to a given point at an accelerated rate thereafter, as though finally having learned how, it can carry on the process more easily."

I nodded, with reservations on how much of this could fairly be termed "mental," and how much was a purely chemical process. Then, in fairness, I reversed the coin and made the same reservations as to how much of brain activity could be called a chemical response to stimuli, and how much must be classed as pure thought over and beyond a specialized chemistry. I gave up.

"Put it in the dark," he continued, "and it slows and ceases to oxidize. Bring it back into the light, within a short time, and it immediately begins to oxidize again, as if it had remembered how to do it." He moved to his

middle finger. "We have there, then, quite faithful replicas of learning and remembering."

I nodded again to show my willingness to speculate, at least, even if I didn't agree.

"But leave it in the dark for twenty-four hours," he moved to his third finger, "then bring it back into the light and it takes it another twenty-four hours to begin oxidizing again. Now we have an equally faithful replica of forgetting and relearning." He tapped each of his four fingers lightly for emphasis.

"The inhibitions and stimulations?" I prompted.

"Well, perhaps we go a little farther afield for that," he said honestly, "in that we introduce foreign substances. We add other chemicals to it to slow down its oxidation rate, or stop it entirely—inhibitions. We add other substances to speed up the rate, as quick driers in paints. Perhaps it's a little far-fetched, but not essentially different from adrenalin being pumped into the bloodstream to make the brain act at a faster rate. The body has quite a few of these glandular secretions which it uses to change the so-called normal mental processes."

"Where do we go from there?" I asked, without committing myself. But he was not through with his instruction.

"I fail to see any essential difference," he looked me squarely in the eyes, "between a stored impulse in a brain cell, a stored impulse in a mercury tube, a stored impulse in an electronic relay, or for that matter a hole punched in an old-fashioned tabulator card."

I pursed my lips and indicated I could go along with his analogy. He was beginning to talk my language now. Working with its results constantly, I, too, was not one to be impressed with how unusually marvelous was the brain. But I murmured something about relative complexity. It was not entirely simple either.

"Sure, complexity," he agreed. He was becoming much more human now. "But we approach any complexity by breaking it down into its basic parts, and each part taken alone is not complex. Complexity is no more than arrangement, not the basic building blocks themselves."

That was how I approached human problems and told

him so. We were getting to be two buddies now in a hot thinking session.

"Just so we don't grow too mechanistic about it," I demurred.

"Let's don't get mystical about it, either," he snapped back at me. "Let's get mechanistic about it. What's so wrong with that? Isn't adding two and two in a machine getting pretty mechanistic? Are we so frightened at that performance we will refuse to make one which will multiply three and three?"

"I guess I'm not that frightened," I agreed with a smile. "We're in the computer business."

"We're supposed to be," he amended.

"So you want time and money to work on a chemical which will store impulses," I said with what I thought was my usual brilliant incisiveness. I began to remember that Sara probably had little Jennie Malasek outside by now, and that was an unfinished problem I had to handle tonight.

"No, no," he said impatiently and rocked me back into my chair, "I've already got that. I wouldn't have come in here with nothing more than just an idea. I've been some years analyzing quantitatively and qualitatively the various chemicals of brain cells. I've made some crude syntheses."

He placed the cylinder on the desk. I looked at the long dark object; I looked particularly at the oily shimmering liquid inside the unbreakable plastic case. It caught the light from my window and seemed to look back at me.

"I want," he continued, "to test this synthesis by hooking it up to a cybernetic machine, shooting controlled impulses through it, seeing what it will store on one impulse and give up on another. I simply want to test the results of my work."

"It will take a little doing," I stuck my neck out and prepared to get to bat for him. "The human mind is not as logical or as accurate as a machine. There are certain previous arrangements of impulses stored in certain brains which will cause the mouth to say 'No!' I'll have to

do some rearranging of such basic blocks first." I was grinning broadly now, and he was grinning back at me.

He got up out of his chair and walked toward my door. "I'll leave the cylinder with you," he said. "I read in a salesmanship course that a prospect will buy much easier if you place the article in his hands."

"What were you doing, studying salesmanship?" I asked, still grinning.

"Apparently it was justified," he said cryptically, and walked out the door.

Sara came to the door and looked in. "You took long enough on that one," she accused.

"It takes a little longer," I said with pedantic gravity, "to lead a scientist to the essential point. He's a little more resourceful in figuring out hazards to keep himself from getting where he wants to go."

But I remembered Auerbach's remarks about salesmanship. "However, in this instance," I mused honestly, "I'm not just sure as to who was leading whom."

"You wanted little Jennie Malasek," Sara said. "You may have her."

I wasn't reassured by the phrasing, the emphasis, or the look on her face.

The time I had lost on the last two interviews, I made up on this one. Children are realists and only poorly skilled in hypocrisy. They will go along with the gag if an adult insists on being whimsical, conciliatory or fantastic, but only because adults are that way and there's nothing they can do about it.

Sara brought Jennie in, gave me a cryptic look, and closed the door behind her as she left.

Jennie stood at the door, a dark little thing, showing some evidence that the nursery teachers had made an attempt to clean her up before sending her over. They hadn't quite succeeded. There was no chocolate around her pinched little mouth, so Sara hadn't succeeded in capturing her either. I wondered why they hadn't combed her black hair, and then realized Jennie might have pulled it down in front of her face for something to hide

behind. Her black eyes gleamed as she peered at me through the oily strands.

"Sit in this chair, Jennie," I said casually, and went on being busy with things on the top of my desk. My request wasn't quite a command, but took obedience entirely for granted. It didn't work with Jennie.

She still stood at the door, the toe of one slippered foot on the arch of the other, her thin little legs twisted at an odd angle. Her look was neither defiant nor bashful. Nor was it courage covering fear. I was the nearest source of immediate danger. I should be watched. It was simply that, no more.

I felt I should pity her, that I should warm to her desperate isolation. I was willing to feel sympathy because she did not ask for it, because ordinarily I admired and liked people who did not accentuate their pathos with calculated fraud.

I found, to my surprise, that I did not like her. Oddly, I felt she knew it. And even worse, I felt that, knowing it, she was not hurt. But at least she did call for respect. Whatever she was, she was sincerely—whatever she was. I would not be a fraud either. I went to the point.

"They tell me, Jennie," I said as matter-of-factly as I could, and I'm experienced at it, "that you throw things and set things on fire."

If I expected either a burst of tears or defiance, I was mistaken. I didn't have time to observe reactions at all.

It was as if a sudden hurricane and earthquake had hit the room at the same time. A desk tray full of papers whizzed by my head; my pen stand crashed through the window back of me; I got a shower of paper clips in the chest; my intercom described an arc and crashed, broken, into a corner. By the time I had wiped the ashes and tobacco from my ashtray out of my eyes and got them to stay open again, Jennie was gone. Sara was standing in the doorway with a look of consternation on her face.

I was on my way home before I remembered that when Sara and I had cleaned up the mess, I had not remembered picking up Auerbach's little cylinder, his chemical impulse storer. I last saw it laying on the corner of my desk where Auerbach had left it.

Probably Sara had picked it up and put it away. Anyway, the office was within security boundaries. The cylinder would be safe there.

I put it out of my mind, and wondered if the library had a card index classification under the heading of "poltergeist."

I wasn't much better prepared when I came into my office the following morning. Yes, of course, there was plenty of literature on the subject under such writers as Fort, books on oriental philosophy and the like. Orthodox psychologists had left the subject strictly alone, their attitude apparently being better to ignore the phenomenon than to risk precious and precarious reputation.

Poltergeism, then, remained something which one read about as an obscure, far away thing. I found no handy hints to help when one had it to deal with at first hand, no how-to-do-it books on the subject.

Worse, I found myself with a hangover of uncertainty, indecision. My deft incisiveness was gone. I felt a growing doubt that I had always been as smart as I thought I was.

I shook off the mood as I walked through the outer personnel offices toward my own. No matter how unsure, one must be positive and definite for the sake of the people who depend upon him for some certainties.

Sara had not quite come to the same decision. There was a look of puzzlement on her face when I started through her office toward mine. Uncertainty of whether she should pick up the usual banter as though nothing had happened; or was I really in trouble? I decided to set her mind at rest at least.

"When you picked up last night, after that little wildcat had her tantrum," I greeted her, "did you put away a little plastic cylinder?"

"Why no, Mr. Kennedy," she said and followed me into my office. "I didn't see one."

We looked in the corners of the room, under the desk, behind the chairs. We did not find it. I opened the window where the broken pane had been replaced, and looked out on the ground. It might have followed the pen stand out the window. I did have a vague recollection of

something dark flashing by my head just before I got my face full of ashes. There was no cylinder on the ground.

When Sara is puzzled, she has a way of tapping her chin with her finger and looking up at the ceiling.

"Is that what you're looking for?" she asked, and pointed to the corner above my head.

I looked up and saw the cylinder embedded in the broken plaster. Apparently the jagged edges had caught it and kept it from falling. We hadn't noticed it before, because who looks at a ceiling in a familiar room? Apparently the janitors don't look at ceilings, either.

"O.K., Sara, thanks," I dismissed her. "Try to hold the hounds at bay, gal. I've got some thinking to do this morning."

"I shouldn't wonder," she grinned. "Anybody who calls himself a personnel psychologist, and then forces little children to have tantrums in spite of themselves—" The door closed, and saved me the trouble of hearing the completion of her sentence.

Yes, Sara was back on familiar ground. I wished I were.

I dragged a spare straight chair over and stood up on it to get the cylinder. It didn't want to move. Plaster fell around me. The jagged pieces holding it now fell away, and still it didn't move. It gave off the impression of pressing upward against the buttonboard.

I took hold of it and tugged. It came away reluctantly, an identical sensation of lifting a heavy object from the ground, in reverse. It remained heavy, invertedly heavy, as I carried it down and over to my desk.

Habit made me lay it on top of my desk and take my hand away. Habit made me grab for it as it shot upward, just as habit makes me grab for a thing which is falling. This time I put it into a drawer, and held my hand over it to keep it down as I closed the drawer.

I sank back into my chair and hooked my toes under the ledge of the desk. It raised into the air, slowly, buoyantly. I took the pressure of my toes away hurriedly. The desk hovered for a moment, tilted in the air. I put my hand on the top and nervously pressed it back to the floor again. I didn't really expect to hear raps on wood or tin

bugles blowing, because I knew it was the cylinder in the drawer which was lifting the desk corner.

There was a very logical explanation of why the desk was trying to float upward. The cylinder was pushing it upward, of course. Yes, very logical. I took one of my nice clean handkerchiefs from another drawer and wiped the sweat off my forehead. There was a logical reason for the sweat, too. I was scared.

"Get me Auerbach," I said to Sara in my new intercom. No doubt it was all over the plant by now that I had smashed my old one in a fit of rage. I settled back into my chair again, and pressed my knees against the desk to keep them from shaking. I shouldn't have done it. The desk bobbed away from me and settled slowly again. I left it there and waited. I sat well away from it, and tried to speculate on what survival factor shaking knees could represent.

Auerbach was not long in arriving. His expression, when he came through the door, was a mixed one of hope I had already got some results for him and touchiness that he should have been summoned like an ordinary employee.

"Take hold of that corner of the desk and lift," I suggested. He looked puzzled, but complied. The desk buoyed upward, this time so strongly that my papers and pen stand slid off to the floor.

"Not so hard, man," I shouted.

"But I barely touched it," he said, incredulously.

I waved him to the crying chair and ignored the accusation written all over his face that I was playing tricks on him. I reached into the desk drawer and pulled out the cylinder. I handed it to him and he took it—from beneath, naturally, to hold it up. It shot up out of his hand and crashed against the ceiling. Plaster fell around him. He spit a sliver of it out of his open mouth as he gazed up at the cylinder.

"Must you be so careless and drop it up?" I snapped.

He didn't answer, and I just let it lay there where it had fallen against the ceiling.

"It isn't particular about what it learns, is it?" I asked,

as if there were nothing at all abnormal about the situation.

He brought his eyes away from it and tried to answer, but there was a glaze over his eyes. I noticed his hands begin to shake, and that gave me confidence. My knees had stopped now, with only a small tremor now and then. Auerbach reached over and tugged at the desk corner, but the desk now hugged the floor as if it liked it and refused to budge.

"It doesn't care what it learns, does it?" I repeated. This time he did a better job of trying to come to his senses. His face was a study in attempts to rationalize what he had seen with what he thought he knew. Apparently he wasn't having much luck. But at least he didn't deny what he had seen. I took courage from that. He might prove to be more intelligent than learned after all.

"Let us," I began in a dry classroom manner, "assume, for sake of discussion, that your cylinder can store impulses."

He nodded, as if this were a safe enough assumption. It was a hopeful sign that I was getting through to him.

"It wouldn't know, of itself, which was up and which was down," I pursued.

"Gravity is a real world condition," he started answering now. "Not dependent upon knowledge. It works whether we know it or not."

"Well, that's a point which has been debated for the last several thousand years to no conclusion," I disagreed. "But let's take an illustration. Let's formulate a hypothesis, a variant world condition where biologists might know only natural air-breathing animals."

He nodded again, a little more of the daze gone from his eyes. He was capable of a hypothesis.

"An entirely different structure of theory and expression of natural laws would be built up from that," I reasoned. "One of these would be the basic law that to be classified as alive a thing must breathe natural air." I pushed the point into my desk top with my finger.

He felt he should object as a matter of principle; should, in scientific tradition, discard the main point in favor of arguing semantics and definitions. That was al-

ways safe and didn't require one to think. But I didn't let him escape that easily.

"Now suppose, within that framework, a biologist fished a minnow out of a stream, carried it dry to his laboratory and proceeded to analyze it. You and I know the minnow would die in transit. Now he observes that it does not breathe air, and could not have breathed air down in the water, therefore it does not represent a life form at all. That is his real world condition, isn't it?"

"Yes," he agreed hesitantly. "But there would be so many other evidences that it does represent life. He would have to be extremely stupid not to recognize that his basic rules defining life were wrong."

"Let us concede," I said dryly, "that he is very stupid. But let us be kind. Let us say that it is the entire framework of thought in which he finds himself which is stupid. All his life, he has been educated to this framework. Science and society have weighted him down with immutable laws. To question them would represent nothing less than chaos."

"Yes," he urged me now to go on.

"We come along, you and I, and we operate in a different framework of thought. In our world condition, fish obtain oxygen directly from water. *But we could not prove that to him.*"

"I don't see—"

"Look," I said patiently, "since his base law requires life to breathe air, he would demand, as proof of our contention, that we show it breathing air. We couldn't do it. He will not give up the foundation of his science. We can't prove our claim until he does."

"Stalemate," Auerbach agreed. "But where does that leave us?"

"It leaves us with the conception that there may be any number of frameworks, separated from one another by perhaps the thinnest of partitions, each containing its own set of real world conditions, natural laws, consistent within itself, obeying its own logic, having its own peculiar cause-effect sequences."

"And one of these substitutes down for up?" he asked skeptically.

"Some of the most noted thinkers the world has ever produced contend that the mind is the only reality," I said slowly. "Now suppose we have a child of an ignorant parent. The child has been neglected, left to vegetate alone in its room, never associates with other children, never has the opportunity to learn what our framework of thinking calls natural law, real world conditions. Such a child might formulate for itself a real world matrix quite different from ours."

Auerbach was silent, but looked at me fixedly.

"For one example, it might take things very literally," I said. "It might form natural laws out of slang phrases. The child's mother uses the phrase, 'It just burns me up.' Suppose then the child, when it was vexed, just literally 'burned things up.' Ever hear of a poltergeist?"

"Oh come now, Kennedy," he remonstrated, "that's fairy-tale stuff."

"There are hundreds of carefully documented case histories," I said, without getting heated about it. "Refusal to look at poltergeist phenomena is on the order of the biologist refusing to consider the minnow alive. Things just catch on fire where these poltergeists are. Things just fly through the air where they are. There must be an explanation. We know that."

"We have some statements to that effect," he corrected.

"We have some statements about what is our own basic natural law, too," I countered. "And that's all we have. Just some statements."

"And such statements apply only within the partitions of the framework?" he asked, neither skeptically nor in agreement. He looked up at the cylinder again. "So your explanation for that is a poltergeist phenomenon?" he mused.

"Yes."

"I wish you had some other explanation," he said. "I don't like that one. Almost any other kind of an explanation would be better."

"So do I," I answered in complete agreement, "but that's the only one I've got. You see, I saw a poltergeist

activate it. Apparently the force of her mind, acting on it, stored it with impulses from her own framework of reality. It would not be particular what it learns, so long as what it learns is consistent with the process used in learning it."

He sighed deeply. "I wish that biologist hadn't picked up that minnow," he said, wistfully.

After my secretary had made suitable protocol negotiations with the general manager's secretary, I headed for Old Stone Face's office, Mr. Henry Grenoble, that is. On the way out of my office, I had trouble with my feet. I was almost floating as I walked along, carrying the cylinder. I detoured over by Receiving and surreptitiously weighed myself on the scales. They read thirty pounds.

"Obviously out of order," I found myself giggling, and wondered if the mood had anything to do with my sensation of weightlessness. Suddenly from the odd looks of employees, it occurred to me that I was buoyantly tripping down the corridor on my toes and giggling to myself. I blushed and tried to look stern. It wasn't easy to stride purposefully when you weren't sure your feet were touching the floor. I hoped they wouldn't think I was drunk, or worse.

"Morning, Henry," I said to the general manager, and received his noncommittal nod. I wasn't his fair-haired boy, but neither was I a thorn in his side. We got along all right by mutual and tacit agreement to leave one another alone. It was the regret of his life that such inefficient machines as people had to be used in his plant, and he was glad enough to leave their management to my care.

I walked over to a straight chair, put the cylinder down under its seat, and watched the chair float upward toward the ceiling. Old Stone Face watched it, too.

I had the satisfaction of seeing a slight widening of his eyes, a quick breath, and a slight thinning of his lips. Obviously, he thought it cataclysmic. I pulled the chair down by grabbing hold of one of its legs, and retrieved the cylinder.

I stooped down and placed it under one corner of the desk.

"Lift," I said.

He took hold of the desk corner hesitantly, as if he were reaching for a pen to sign a raise authorization. The desk corner tilted upward and slid some papers off onto the floor. I reached under and pulled out the cylinder. I handed it to him, this time taking care that it didn't shoot out of his hands toward the ceiling. He felt how heavy it was, in reverse. Out of habit, he laid it down on the desk top, but I was ready for that. I grabbed it about two feet up in the air. Too many broken up ceilings would really start gossip in the building maintenance crew.

Old Stone Face reached for it again, and headed for his little private bathroom. I followed him to the door, and watched him step on the scales. He came out, and handed me the cylinder.

"And I've been trying to do it by dieting," he commented. He sat down at his desk and picked up the phone.

"Get me the Pentagon," he commanded. "Yes, sure, the one in Washington. I don't suppose anybody's walked away with that in their pocket yet. The last time I was in Washington it was still there." He put the receiver back on the book. "She wants to know if I mean the one in Washington," he commented without expression.

"Now look, Henry," I said warily, "aren't you jumping the gun a little? You haven't asked any questions. You don't know what this is. You don't know how it was made. You don't know any of the scientific principles behind it. You don't know if we've got legal rights to it. You don't know how it works or why."

"Details," he said contemptuously. "You've got it, haven't you? A man made it, didn't he? What a man can make once he can make again, can't he? What do I care about the legal details? We got lawyers, haven't we? What do I care about scientific hows and whys? We got experts, haven't we? Why should I ask questions at all? We got antigravity, haven't we? Don't answer. I know the answers."

They weren't precisely the questions I would have

asked, but then, each to his own framework. Then it struck me with a twist of my stomach muscles. I hadn't realized. I'd been so busy thinking about poltergeists and frameworks of different natural law. I'd been thinking in terms of cybernetics, ability to store impulses, even wrong ones.

"Could be antigravity," I agreed in an awed tone.

"What else did you think it was?" he asked.

"I'd rather not say," I murmured.

"Who made it?" he asked.

"Auerbach, partly," I answered.

"Who's he?"

"Research chemist. Works under Boulton."

"Why didn't Boulton bring it to me? Don't answer. Boulton wouldn't believe it would work. What do we keep Boulton around here for? Don't answer. I hired him. Well don't just stand there. Tell Auerbach to get busy. Promote him. Tell him to put them into mass production."

"It's not that simple," I said, and wondered how to tell him.

"Don't give me alibis." His face took on an expression which he apparently hoped was conciliatory. "Ralph, don't you start giving me any of this stall about further research, testing, difficulties, all that folderol. Just put it into production."

"It's a custom-made job," I said, trying to slow him down. "Only an experimental model."

"Custom made today, production line tomorrow," he shook his head in exasperation. "Well, what's holding you up?"

"Money, for one thing." I clutched at the first excuse I could think of, and wished it were as simple as that.

He grabbed the phone again.

"Get me the controller," he barked, and waited. "Tim! What took you so long? Give Kennedy all the money he wants!" He listened for a moment and then turned to me. "He wants to know if you'll need more than a hundred dollars. He's got systems, or something." He turned back to the phone without waiting for my reply. "Well," he

conceded, "I didn't actually mean *all* the money he wants. Let me know if he draws over a million dollars."

He took the receiver away from his ear and looked at it in puzzlement.

"Must have fainted," he commented dryly, and hung up.

"But," I tried to object, thinking how the organization would be split wide open if I went out into the plant and started carrying out his instructions—all the noses out of joint, the toes stepped on. "I'm just the personnel director. I'm not a plant superintendent. I can't go around building buildings, setting up production lines—even if I knew how."

"Get going," he said. "I don't want any more alibis. All I want is a steady stream of antigravity units. That's not too much to ask for, I'm sure!"

"Maybe a million dollars won't do it," I said hopefully, and truthfully, as I reached the door.

"Well, all right," he almost shouted. "We'll get a billion, then. We'll get a hundred billion. What do you think we got taxpayers for?"

"You've been spending too much time in Washington," I commented, as I went through the door. "You're beginning to talk like them."

Maybe Old Stone Face hadn't heard about things which money can't buy—such as a little girl who looks at you from behind strings of black hair. Maybe he hadn't heard about frameworks where money wasn't a consideration. Maybe he hadn't heard about a matrix where the question, "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?" was on the order of the question, "If it's alive, why don't it breathe air?" Maybe he hadn't heard about frameworks, period.

I hoped I wouldn't have to be the one to tell him about them.

Annie Malasek was waiting for me in the outer personnel waiting room. She had little Jennie by the hand. Annie looked stern, Jennie looked penitent. Annie stopped me as I started past her.

"I just came over to tell you, Mr. Kennedy," she

began, "I found out what Jennie did to your nice office last night. I whipped her good. Tell Mr. Kennedy you're sorry, Jennie." She looked down at Jennie sternly, and squeezed her hand.

"I'm sorry," Jennie mumbled.

"Tell Mr. Kennedy you won't do it again," Annie went on remorselessly.

"I won' do it again," Jennie repeated dutifully.

"Tell Mr. Kennedy you're going to be a good little girl from now on, and not burn things up or throw things," Annie pursued with a determined gleam in her eye.

"Good girl," Jennie murmured, and rubbed the arch of one foot with the toe of the other.

I looked at them both, and for once I didn't have anything to say.

There were more conferences with Auerbach. Yes, he could produce more cylinders. Some of the synthetic protein strings were a bit tricky, but otherwise it wouldn't be difficult to duplicate the cylinder. No, just an ordinary laboratory would do, at least until we went into mass production. That's nice, he'd always wanted to be a department head. The latter was said absently, and I doubted he had even heard me.

"How are you going to activate the cylinders?" he asked curiously. I noticed the particular use of the second person pronoun, because in everything else it was "we." Activating them was not his responsibility.

There were conferences with Boulton, whose nose was out of joint that Auerbach had been taken out from under his jurisdiction without consulting him about it. For the sake of organization I had to mollify him. There were conferences with the plant superintendent, who could throw all sorts of petty hazards in my way if he were pulling against me. There were conferences with the controller, the carpenter boss. In short there were people, and therefore there were personal tensions to be unsnarled.

There was another conference in Old Stone Face's office, this time with a pink-cheeked colonel, sent out as an advance scout from the Pentagon. From the look of him

it was the most dangerous scouting mission he had ever tried. His pink cheeks grew red as he watched me go through my act with the antigrav cylinder. His pink cheeks grew purple when I evaded his questions with something approaching idiocy. He was certainly not one I wished to introduce to frameworks and partitions. He was a rocket man, himself.

Auerbach was at that conference, and where I had been idiotic, the good doctor was a glib doubletalker. He sounded so impressive that it didn't occur to anybody he wasn't making sense.

Since the colonel didn't believe what he saw, and didn't understand what he heard, the brass staff, deployed well back of the front lines, would have got a very poor report from their advance scout had we not been Computer Research; and had not Old Stone Face been a frequent visitor to the Pentagon. In this case the colonel was afraid to embroider what he saw with too much of his own opinion. We were duly notified of an impending visitation from a full dress parade of brass and braid. Stirred to unusual action, no doubt, by the plaintive and public outcry of a country-boy congressman, "But what do all of them *do*, over there in that big building?"

During this time my staff, like good boys and girls, took over the burden of my work without complaint. I spent a great deal of my time in Auerbach's new laboratory.

We tried all sorts of attempts to make the antigrav aspect of the first cylinder rub off on others he had made. We let them lie coyly side by side for hours and days. We lashed the first to another and let it zoom up to the now padded ceiling. We tried shocking them, freezing them, heating them. Nothing worked. Either the new cylinders had already learned that down was down—that old tired framework—or more likely hadn't learned anything at all.

We thought at them. We stood there, Auerbach and I, working singly, working in tandem, thinking at them. Apparently our thoughts didn't amount to much; or we had learned too early in life that you can't get any effect on a physical object by just thinking about it. They just lay there, fat, oily, and inert.

Auerbach went back to his test tubes and beakers, trying to see if antigrav wasn't inherent, somehow, in the chemical arrangements. He had accepted the hypothesis of other frameworks as an intellectual exercise, but he still hoped to prove they were not a reality, that the aspect could be accounted for within the framework he knew. He had not accepted the partitions, that his real world condition was circumscribed, confined, limited.

I went back to Jennie.

Obviously, to me, it was the mental force of her fear, hatred, anger, survival potential, whatever it was, acting through whatever framework she had devised for herself, which activated the first cylinder. So I gave up being stubborn, and called for little Jennie Malasek once more.

She came in the door of my office and stood as she had before. This time her hair was pulled back tightly and tied with a ribbon. So she hid behind a glaze over her eyes, instead.

I had about a dozen of the cylinders on the top of my desk, and had a lot of mixed hope and hopelessness within me. I wondered if the admonishments of her mother had had any basic effect upon her. I wondered if the additional attention she was now getting over in the nursery, since the teachers had learned I had taken notice of her, had changed anything in her.

"I didn't tell your mother on you, when you messed up my office that time," I said as an opening sentence.

She didn't answer, just looked at me impassively. But it did seem that she blushed a little. Had she grown ashamed of throwing things and burning things up?

"Just a secret between you and me," I said. "I don't think it is wrong to throw things the way you did. I think it was very clever."

She didn't answer.

"I wish you would do it again. I'd like to see you do it."

"I can't," she whispered in a very small voice. "I'm a good girl now."

Oh no. Character doesn't change that fast. Maybe she thought she was a good girl, but down underneath—

"I don't think you're a good girl," I said with a sneer. "I think you're a very naughty girl, a nasty little girl."

I hoped, how I hoped she would flare up in anger, or protection, and hurl the cylinders at me. I hoped to get a face full of ashes, an office full of broken windows and flying cylinders.

Her face still did not change its expression. She still stood there, impassive. Her only reaction was two large, crystal tears which formed in the corners of her eyes and began to roll slowly down her cheeks.

I flipped my intercom and called Sara.

"Take her back to the nursery, Sara," I said wearily.

Sara came in, saw the tears, and without speaking to me, she took Jennie's hand and led her away.

I sat at my desk and hated myself with contempt and loathing. There were times when I didn't like my job; when I didn't like myself for being skilled enough to do it. There were times when people became a little more than just some material to be shaped and directed into the best use for it.

But my mood did not last. I had a job to do. This was no time to grow soft, sentimental, wavering.

The fact that Jennie was outwardly changing from the strange little creature which excited no sympathy to a bewildered and hurt little girl who very definitely called for compassion changed the facts not at all.

The prime necessity was to activate more of the cylinders. Jennie was the only means at hand by which that could be done. I wasn't sure that even she could do it, but I had to find out. I had to see if down beneath the surface she wasn't still the same wild instrument of an even wilder talent.

Basic character doesn't change that fast, not just because somebody says it ought to change, not unless there is a violent and traumatic shock jolting the individual completely out of his framework and into another.

I had to go ahead and try.

I spent more, quite a bit more, of the funds at my disposal. The controller O.K.'d my vouchers as if the dollars were individual drops of his blood, and read the legends

on the vouchers with a firm conviction that I had really lost my mind.

Old Stone Face asked no questions. He was not one to assign a job to a man and then nag him about the details. He wanted results. But there was puzzlement in his face when he saw no building wings being converted, no assembly lines and moving belts being constructed, no supervisors, cost accountants, production control people assigned to the new work.

Instead, I spent money on animated cartoons, three-dimensional cartoons. A director, experimenting in that new medium, had told me the most difficult job was to keep the action behind the screen, give it depth without the illusion that it was projecting out into the audience—to give a stage depth effect without getting a poke in the eye effect.

I wanted the opposite. I wanted my audience, an audience of one, to get the illusion of a poke in the eye. I caused a special nursery to be built, just for Jennie. I had a studio make a short but elaborate sequence which only one person would view.

I placed Auerbach's total supply of new cylinders in various spots around the room, a dozen or so of them. I had the projectors installed in an adjoining room, and a tiny window, lost in some decoration effects, where I could watch through.

I went to the nursery and got Jennie. She was neither glad nor protesting. The nursery teacher objected a little. Jennie was doing such a fine job of adjusting to the other children now. They had had no more trouble. Apparently all that had been wrong was that Jennie had been starved for attention and affection. But now she was becoming a perfectly normal little girl. Didn't I think so too, Mr. Kennedy? And, are you ill, Mr. Kennedy? You don't look well at all! How kind you are, ill and everything, to think of little Jennie!

I led Jennie out of the nursery over to the new room built especially for her. I did not react. I did not react! I did not react! I could not react, I was one solid mass of self-contempt and loathing.

I put Jennie in the room, wordlessly, and she stood

near the door, where I left her. I walked into the adjoining projection room, closed the door behind me, and started punching buttons. It was a form of punishment to make myself walk over to my little window and watch when the automatic machinery took over.

Darkness blotted out the room, then an eerie blue light began to glow over the complex meshes of the screen in front and to the sides of Jennie. Trees, vines, bushes took on form, swayed a little, seemed alive. Knots on the trunks of the trees suggested faces, not kind faces. Limbs and twigs stirred and seemed to reach toward Jennie.

I saw her take a small step backward until she had her back to the door. She turned and pulled at the knob, but the door wouldn't open. She turned back then and faced the growing light, the clearer scene all around her. I saw her lips move stiffly, and though I could not hear her, they seemed to form the words, "Good girl now."

Far in the distance in front of her a deep red glow appeared, took form, part animal, part reptile and, even more horrible, part man. Slowly it seemed to become aware of her; its very deliberateness, its sureness, was its greatest horror.

The room was a pandemonium then. The cylinders flew through the air toward the trees, toward the monster, crashing through the screen, tearing it to shreds, crashing against the padded walls.

On the floor, in a crumpled heap, lay Jennie. She was still and lifeless. I punched a control button to bring the room back to normalcy, and ran into the room to her. Her heart was beating faintly, her pulse a thin string of fluttering.

I shouted into the hall, "Get a doctor!"

I ran back and began to administer first aid for acute shock. It was not until the doctor came from our hospital room and carried Jennie away that I looked around me.

Most of the cylinders lay on the floor, inert, but five of them pushed against the ceiling at the back of the room. The experiment had been a success!

I went to see Jennie in the hospital room. She had come out of her faint and was sobbing brokenly now. As

soon as I came into the room, she reached out her hands, grabbed mine.

"I got scared," she said. "You went away and left me. The lights went out. But I didn't do anything, really I didn't. I just got scared."

The suspicion and anger smoothed out of the faces of the nurse and doctor. Her unaccountable reaction of being glad to see me after what I had done to her, her words seeming to carry a completely normal conviction of what might happen to any imaginative little girl who was afraid of the dark, closed off their possibility of searching into what really happened.

But I knew that I would never use Jennie again, no matter what the urgency for antigravity. Some other way would have to be found. I would not do it again. And I doubted now, after this shock—the surface shock of normal fear, the deeper shock of conflict in using the wild talents which made her a bad girl against the affection she was getting for being a good girl—whether she could ever use her framework again, even if I would.

It had been a severe thing, a terrible thing I had done; but no worse than the methods used constantly in mental hospitals to transfer the minds of patients from one framework to another.

I went back to my office, took the cylinder out of my desk, and sat, holding it in my hands, for a long time.

Through the days that passed I became more distrait, overwhelmed by the insolubility of my problem. My staff still handled the bulk of my work, for it was obvious to them that my interest was far from the petty conflicts and situations of normal plant operation. Department heads became cool toward me, for Sara managed to turn them away before they got in to me.

I wandered the corridors searching faces for some hint of a wild talent beneath the too tame eyes. I thought of advertising for poltergeists in the help-wanted columns, and then realized what would happen if some alert reporter happened to pick up the item. I thought of contacting various universities and shuddered at the reception I would get. I even found myself visiting the nursery

again, hoping for the improbable coincidence of another poltergeist. But all the little children were being good little fairies and elves and brownies.

The announcement that a full complement of high-ranking military men were going to visit us and assist us in our lagging production of the antigrav cylinders did not reassure me. I had dealt with the military mind, singly and in coveys, before.

I hadn't told Old Stone Face the problem, either. His total framework seemed to consist of "Get out production. Give me no alibis." This was hardly conducive to philosophical meandering.

The day came when staff cars carried generals, admirals, colonels and captains from the airport to our plant. Word filtered over the intercom system that they had been closeted in the big conference room with Stone Face for an hour—apparently playing with the five cylinders.

I hoped they wouldn't scratch the varnish of the big conference table against the ceiling of the roof. I hoped they wouldn't try to ride around in buoyant chairs. Learning to balance, doing that, was tricky, and if they tilted, a big blob of blubber would find the floor hard and unyielding.

Finally they sent for me.

I left my cylinder locked in my desk and walked up to the conference room under normal gravity, hoping the weight would pull me down to a worried, heavy, lugubrious frame of mind so stylish in the real-world framework.

The conference room had an aroma of dignity, an overpowering impressiveness of brass and braid. Thin faces, fat faces, long faces, squeezed up faces, but Pinky was not there. Apparently he was off on some other dangerous mission. The faces did not, could not, live up to the scrambled eggs and fruit salad of their caps and collars and sleeves and chest.

I thought of Emerson's dissertations on compensation and giggled. What they lacked in those faces they tried to make up for in decorations. I knew that I would not discuss frameworks in this room.

They pressed me for explanations. They bored in deeper and deeper. I could not help it. My mood began to

lighten, become irresponsible. I hung on to what dignity I could muster for the sake of the apprehension and alarm in Old Stone Face's eyes. He wasn't such a bad guy. At least he didn't depend on uniforms to make his impressive.

"The first cylinder was an accident," I said to the blur of faces down the long table. "Sometimes accidents are hard to duplicate. So many factors, gentlemen."

"But you did duplicate it," the commanding general pointed out. "You activated five more. We have questioned Dr. Auerback at length. He knows absolutely nothing of the method you use in activating these cylinders. Apparently no one knows but you. It is imperative that we know."

I was in for it now. I had to explain somehow, or something.

"But, gentlemen," I protested hesitantly, and then heard myself saying, "I spoiled my poltergeist in making this half dozen, and I don't have another."

There was a sigh of relief around the table, relaxation, suppressed contempt. I had not realized before how tense they all were.

"I'm certain," the commanding general said placatingly, as if he were trying to reason with a small child, "that it can be replaced."

"They're hard to get," I faltered.

"We will get them," he stated pompously, confidently. "Difficult perhaps for you personally, yes, or even Computer Research." He smiled patiently. "But for the military it is another matter entirely." He turned and waved down the table toward another member of the brass trust.

"General Sanfordwaithe is Supply and Matériel. I am sure it is within the power of the combined armed forces to get you all the whatever-it-is you may need."

I looked down the table at General Sanfordwaithe with a question in my eyes. He looked smugly back at me.

"Do you know what a poltergeist is?" I asked.

He looked slightly piqued.

"I am administrative," he reproved gently and patiently, as only a military man can put a civilian in his place. "I do not pretend to be personally familiar with the specifications of every one of the several million items

under my jurisdiction." He smiled, and his voice became almost waggish. "But I am certain you will find our poltergeist division sympathetic to your needs."

That did it.

"Oh goodie," I exclaimed. "Then maybe you'd better send me a half dozen to start with."

"And is that all that's been holding you up?" the commanding general asked, softly reproving.

"And this time, make them little boy poltergeists," I urged. "Mine was a little girl poltergeist, and maybe that was what was wrong—just too delicate for the job."

I could see by their faces they assumed I was talking about some gadget similar to a male and female electrical plug, and was being cute in my terminology.

"Mr. Kennedy hasn't been feeling well lately," Old Stone Face put in hurriedly. "He's been working very hard. Much too hard. I would have sent him on a long rest weeks ago had this not been so urgent."

They looked at me with some pity beneath their contempt—a soft civilian.

From there on it was no more than a diplomatic and tactical withdrawal of forces. I withdrew early, to allow Old Stone Face further time for excuses of my behavior.

But they would be back.

The order would go out from General Sanfordwaithe's office to supply me with a half dozen male type poltergeists immediately. It would flow down through the echelons of command, getting sterner and terser. There would be some scrambling around trying to find the poltergeist division, but no one would become alarmed that it had been lost. That was customary.

There would be days, perhaps weeks, when the orders would be pigeonholed, on the theory that if you just forget to do anything about it, the need will pass. But General Sanfordwaithe would not let them forget this time. There would be memoranda, each one dredging a little farther down the chain of command before it, in turn, became pigeonholed.

And finally, somewhere down the line, some clerk would know what a poltergeist was. He would first go to the source books and look it up, so that he could have the para-

graphs to substantiate him when he tried to tell his commanding officer what was wanted. From there the explanations would flow back up through the echelons of command. Faces would get redder and redder, angrier and angrier.

Yes, they would be back. But until then, I could go back to being a personnel director, I thought, this time with genuine pleasure, of the simple little problems waiting for me back at my office. Nothing more than imminent strikes, lockouts, legal tangles, visits from the Industrial Welfare Commission, and Miss Jones won't let Miss Smith have a fresh pencil until she brings the stub of her old one to the supply room.

I walked on down the corridors of the plant and nodded pleasantly to department heads and key personnel who caught my eye. I saw their faces break with relief, and then grow tart with, "Well, it's about time you came off your high horse and noticed us."

I would have a lot of ruffled feathers to smooth down in the next few days.

Much to their surprise, I spoke pleasantly to the members of my staff when I came into the outer rooms of the personnel department, and ruefully saw them start to dig down into stack of papers for problems they had been hoarding until I got in a good mood again.

I walked on into Sara's office and quipped something at her. She almost fell out of her chair in astonishment, and began to sniffle. Her feelings had been badly bruised.

"There are handkerchiefs in my desk," I said drily. Her sniffles stopped instantly.

"Now," I said. "Take a letter. General Sanfordwaithe, Pentagon. Confirming our conference of this date, production on the implement in question will not proceed until your Division of Supply and Matériel furnishes us with one half dozen, six, male-type poltergeists."

"Are you feeling all right?" Sara interrupted me with wide eyes.

"I feel wonderful," I answered. "I have learned something from our employees. I have shifted the responsibility for my problem onto other shoulders. I feel swell!"

"But what if they should supply them to you after all?" she asked.

Heinlein is one of the science fiction greats. He has a gift for creating reality with a multitude of deft, intimate touches. His imagination can be as unlimited as the universe and the far future, or confined, as in this story, to the taut boundaries of a here-and-now crisis.

PROJECT NIGHTMARE

by Robert Heinlein

"FOUR'S YOUR POINT. ROLL 'EM!"

"Anybody want a side bet on double deuces?"

No one answered; the old soldier rattled dice in a glass, pitched then against the washroom wall. One turned up a deuce; the other spun. Somebody yelled, "It's going to five! Come, Phoebe!"

It stopped—a two. The old soldier said, "I told you not to play with me. Anybody want cigarette money?"

"Pick it up, Pop. We don't—oh, oh! 'Ten*shun!*"

In the door stood a civilian, a colonel, and a captain. The civilian said, "Give the money back, Two-Gun."

"Okay, Prof." The old soldier extracted two singles. "That much is mine."

"Stop!" objected the captain. "I'll impound that for evidence. Now, you men—"

The colonel stopped him. "Mick. Forget that you're adjutant. Private Andrews, come along." He went out; the others followed. They hurried through the enlisted men's club, out into desert sunshine and across the quadrangle.

The civilian said, "Two-Gun, what the deuce!"

"Shucks, Prof, I was just practicing."

"Why don't you practice against Grandma Wilkins?"

The soldier snorted. "Do I look silly?"

The colonel put in, "You're keeping a crowd of generals and V.I.P.s waiting. That isn't bright."

"Colonel Hammond, I was told to wait in the club."

"But not in its washroom. Step it up!"

They went inside headquarters to a hall where guards checked their passes before letting them in. A civilian was speaking: "—and that's the story of the history-making experiments at Duke University. Doctor Reynolds is back; he will conduct the demonstrations."

The officers sat down in the rear; Dr. Reynolds went to the speaker's table. Private Andrews sat down with a group set apart from the high brass and distinguished civilians of the audience. A character who looked like a professional gambler—and was—sat next to two beautiful redheads, identical twins. A fourteen-year-old Negro boy slumped in the next chair; he seemed asleep. Beyond him a most wide-awake person, Mrs. Anna Wilkins, tatted and looked around. In the second row were college students and a drab middle-aged man.

The table held a chuck-a-luck cage, packs of cards, scratch pads, a Geiger counter, a lead carrying case. Reynolds leaned on it and said, "Extrasensory perception, or ESP, is a tag for little-known phenomena—telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, precognition, telekinesis. They exist; we can measure them; we know that some people are thus gifted. But we don't know how they work. The British, in India during World War One, found that secrets were being stolen by telepathy." Seeing doubt in their faces Reynolds added, "It is conceivable that a spy five hundred miles away is now 'listening in'—and picking your brains of top-secret data."

Doubt was more evident. A four-star Air Force general

said, "One moment, Doctor—if true, what can we do to stop it?"

"Nothing."

"That's no answer. A lead-lined room?"

"We've tried that, General. No effect."

"Jamming with high frequencies? Or whatever 'brain waves' are?"

"Possibly, though I doubt it. If ESP becomes militarily important you may have to operate with all facts known. Back to our program: These ladies and gentlemen are powerfully gifted in telekinesis, the ability to control matter at a distance. Tomorrow's experiment may not succeed, but we hope to convince the doubting Thomases" —he smiled at a man in the rear—"that it is worth trying."

The man he looked at stood up. "General Hanby!"

An Army major general looked around. "Yes, Doctor Withers?"

"I ask to be excused. My desk is loaded with urgent work—and these games have nothing to do with me."

The commanding general started to assert himself; the four-star visitor put a hand on his sleeve. "Doctor Withers, my desk in Washington is piled high, but I am here because the President sent me. Will you please stay? I want a skeptical check on my judgment."

Withers sat down, still angry. Reynolds continued: "We will start with ESP rather than telekinesis—which is a bit different, anyhow." He turned to one of the redheads. "Jane, will you come here?"

The girl answered, "I'm Joan. Sure."

"All right—Joan. General LaMott, will you draw something on this scratch pad?"

The four-star flyer cocked an eyebrow. "Anything?"

"Not too complicated."

"Right, Doctor." He thought, then began a cartoon of a girl, grinned and added a pop-eyed wolf. Shortly he looked up. "Okay?"

Joan had kept busy with another pad; Reynolds took hers to the general. The sketches were alike—except that Joan had added four stars to the wolf's shoulders. The

general looked at her; she looked demure. "I'm convinced," he said drily. "What next?"

"That could be clairvoyance or telepathy," Reynolds lectured. "We will now show direct telepathy." He called the second twin to him, then said, "Doctor Withers, will you help us?"

Withers still looked surly. "With what?"

"The same thing—but Jane will watch over your shoulder while Joan tries to reproduce what you draw. Make it something harder."

"Well . . . okay." He took the pad, began sketching a radio circuit while Jane watched. He signed it with a "Clem," the radioman's cartoon of the little fellow peering over a fence.

"That's fine!" said Reynolds. "Finished, Joan?"

"Yes, Doctor." He fetched her pad; the diagram was correct—but Joan had added to "Clem" a wink.

Reynolds interrupted awed comment with, "I will skip card demonstrations and turn to telekinesis. Has anyone a pair of dice?" No one volunteered; he went on, "We have some supplied by your physics department. This chuck-a-luck cage is signed and sealed by them and so is this package." He broke it open, spilled out a dozen dice. "Two-Gun, how about some naturals?"

"I'll try, Prof."

"General LaMott, please select a pair and put them in this cup."

The general complied and handed the cup to Andrews. "What are you going to roll, soldier?"

"Would a sixty-five suit the General?"

"If you can."

"Would the General care to put up a five spot, to make it interesting?" He waited, wide-eyed and innocent.

LaMott grinned. "You're faded, soldier." He peeled out a five; Andrews covered it, rattled the cup and rolled. One die stopped on the bills—a five. The other bounced against a chair—a six.

"Let it ride, sir?"

"I'm not a sucker twice. Show us some naturals."

"As you say, sir." Two-Gun picked up the money, then rolled 6–1, 5–2, 4–3, and back again. He rolled several

6–1s, then got snake eyes. He tried again, got acey-deucey. He faced the little old lady. "Ma'am," he said, "if you want to roll, why don't you get down here and do the work?"

"Why, Mr. Andrews!"

Reynolds said hastily, "You'll get your turn, Mrs. Wilkins."

"I don't know what you gentlemen are talking about." She resumed tatting.

Colonel Hammond sat down by the redheads. "You're the January Twins—aren't you?"

"Our public!" one answered delightedly.

"The name is 'Brown,' " said the other.

" 'Brown'," he agreed, "but how about a show for the boys?"

"Dr. Reynolds wouldn't like it," the first said dutifully.

"I'll handle him. We don't get USO; security regulations are too strict. How about it, Joan?"

"I'm Jane. Okay, if you fix it with Prof."

"Good girls!" He went back to where Grandma Wilkins was demonstrating selection—showers of sixes in the chuck-a-luck cage. She was still tatting. Dr. Withers watched glumly. Hammond said, "Well, Doc?"

"These things are disturbing," Withers admitted, "but it's on the molar level—nothing affecting the elementary particles."

"How about those sketches?"

"I'm a physicist, not a psychologist. But the basic particles—electrons, neutrons, protons—can't be affected except with apparatus designed in accordance with the laws of radioactivity!"

Dr. Reynolds was in earshot; at Withers' remark he said, "Thank you, Mrs. Wilkins. Now, ladies and gentlemen, another experiment. Norman!"

The colored boy opened his eyes. "Yeah, Prof?"

"Up here. And the team from your physics laboratory, please. Has anyone a radium-dial watch?"

Staff technicians hooked the Geiger counter through an amplifier so that normal background radioactivity was heard as occasional clicks, then placed a radium-dial watch close to the counter tube; the clicks changed to

hail-storm volume. "Lights out, please," directed Reynolds.

The boy said, "Now, Prof?"

"Wait, Norman. Can everyone see the watch?" The silence was broken only by the rattle of the amplifier, counting radioactivity of the glowing figures. "Now, Norman!"

The shining figures quenched out; the noise died to sparse clicks.

The same group was in a blockhouse miles out in the desert; more miles beyond was the bomb proving site; facing it was a periscope window set in concrete and glazed with solid feet of laminated filter glass. Dr. Reynolds was talking with Major General Hanby. A naval captain took reports via earphones and speaker horn; he turned to the C.O. "Planes on station, sir."

"Thanks, Dick."

The horn growled, "Station Charlie to Control; we fixed it."

The navy man said to Hanby, "All stations ready, range clear."

"Pick up the count."

"All stations, stand by to resume count at minus seventeen minutes. Time station, pick up the count. This is a live run. Repeat, this is a live run."

Hanby said to Reynolds, "Distance makes no difference?"

"We could work from Salt Lake City once my colleagues knew the setup." He glanced down. "My watch must have stopped."

"Always feels that way. Remember the metronome on the first Bikini test? It nearly drove me nuts."

"I can imagine. Um, General, some of my people are high-strung. Suppose I *ad lib?*"

Hanby smiled grimly. "We always have a pacifier for visitors. Doctor Withers, ready with your curtain raiser?"

The chief physicist was bending over a group at instruments; he looked tired. "Not today," he answered in a flat voice. "Satterlee will make it."

Satterlee came forward and grinned at the brass and

V.I.P.s and at Reynolds' operators. "I've been saving a joke for an audience that can't walk out. But first—" He picked up a polished metal sphere and looked at the ESP adepts. "You saw a ball like this on your tour this morning. That one was plutonium; it's still out there waiting to go *bang!* in about . . . eleven minutes. This is merely steel—unless someone has made a mistake. That would be a joke—we'd laugh ourselves to bits!"

He got no laugh, went on: "But it doesn't weigh enough; we're safe. This dummy has been prepared so that Dr. Reynolds' people will have an image to help them concentrate. It looks no more like an atom bomb than I look like Stalin, but it represents—if it were plutonium what we atom tinkerers call a 'subcritical mass.' Since the spy trials everybody knows how an atom bomb works. Plutonium gives off neutrons at a constant rate. If the mass is small, most of them escape to the outside. But if it is large enough, or a critical mass, enough are absorbed by other nuclei to start a chain reaction. The trick is to assemble a critical mass quickly—then run for your life! This happens in microseconds; I can't be specific without upsetting the security officer.

"Today we will find out if the mind can change the rate of neutron emission in plutonium. By theories sound enough to have destroyed two Japanese cities, the emission of any particular neutron is pure chance, but the total emission is as invariable as the stars in their courses. Otherwise it would be impossible to make atom bombs.

"By standard theory, theory that works, that subcritical mass out there is no more likely to explode than a pumpkin. Our test group will try to change that. They will concentrate, try to increase the probability of neutrons' escaping, and thus set off that sphere as an atom bomb."

"Doctor Satterlee?" asked a vice admiral with wings. "Do you think it can be done?"

"*Absolutely not!*" Satterlee turned to the adepts. "No offense intended, folks."

"Five minutes!" announced the navy captain.

Satterlee nodded to Reynolds. "Take over. And good luck."

Mrs. Wilkins spoke up. "Just a moment, young man. These 'neuter' things. I—"

"Neutrons, madam."

"That's what I said. I don't quite understand. I suppose that sort of thing comes in high school, but I only finished eighth grade. I'm sorry."

Satterlee looked sorry, too, but he tried. "—and each of these nuclei is potentially able to spit out one of these little neutrons. In that sphere out there"—he held up the dummy—"there are, say, five thousand billion trillion nuclei, each one—"

"My, that's quite a lot, isn't it?"

"Madam, it certainly is. Now—"

"Two minutes!"

Reynolds interrupted. "Mrs. Wilkins, don't worry. Concentrate on that metal ball out there and think about those neutrons, each one ready to come out. When I give the word, I want you all—you especially, Norman—to think about that ball, spitting sparks like a watch dial. Try for more sparks. Simply try. If you fail, no one will blame you. Don't get tense."

Mrs. Wilkins nodded. "I'll try." She put her tatting down and got a faraway look.

At once they were blinded by unbelievable radiance bursting through the massive filter. It beat on them, then died away.

The naval captain said, "What the hell!" Someone screamed, "It's gone, it's gone!"

The speaker brayed: "Fission at minus one minute thirty-seven seconds. Control, what went wrong? It looks like a hydrogen—"

The concussion wave hit and all sounds were smothered. Lights went out, emergency lighting clicked on. The blockhouse heaved like a boat in a heavy sea. Their eyes were still dazzled, their ears assaulted by cannonading afternoise, and physicists were elbowing flag officers at the port, when an anguished soprano cut through the din. "Oh, *dear!*"

Reynolds snapped, "What's the matter, Grandma? You all right?"

"Me? Oh, yes, yes—but I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do it."

"Do what?"

"I was just feeling it out, thinking about all those little bitty neuters, ready to spit. But I didn't mean to make it go off—not until you told us to."

"Oh." Reynolds turned to the rest. "Anyone else jump the gun?"

No one admitted it. Mrs. Wilkins said timidly, "I'm sorry, Doctor. Have they got another one? I'll be more careful."

Reynolds and Withers were seated in the officers' mess with coffee in front of them; the physicist paid no attention to his. His eyes glittered and his face twitched. "No limits! Calculations show over *ninety per cent* conversion of mass to energy. You know what that *means?* If we assume—no, never mind. Just say that we could make every bomb the size of a pea. No tamper. No control circuits. Nothing but . . ." He paused. "Delivery would be fast, small jets—just a pilot, a weaponeer, and one of your 'operators.' No limit to the number of bombs. No nation on earth could—"

"Take it easy," said Reynolds. "We've got only a few telekinesis operators. You wouldn't risk them in a plane."

"But—"

"You don't need to. Show them the bombs, give them photos of the targets, hook them by radio to the weaponeer. That spreads them thin. And we'll test for more sensitive people. My figures show about one in eighteen hundred."

" 'Spread them thin,' " repeated Withers. "Mrs. Wilkins could handle dozens of bombs, one after another—couldn't she?"

"I suppose so. We'll test."

"We will indeed!" Withers noticed his coffee, gulped it. "Forgive me, Doctor; I'm punchy. I've had to revise too many opinions."

"I know. I was a behaviorist."

Captain Mikeler came in, looked around and came over. "The General wants you both," he said softly. "Hurry."

They were ushered into a guarded office. Major General Hanby was with General LaMott and Vice Admiral Keithley; they looked grim. Hanby handed them message flimsies. Reynolds saw the stamp TOP SECRET and handed his back. "General, I'm not cleared for this."

"Shut up and read it."

Reynolds skipped the number groups: "—(PARAPHRASED) RUSSIAN EMBASSY TODAY HANDED STATE ULTIMATUM: DEMANDS USA CONVERT TO 'PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC' UNDER POLITICAL COMMISSARS TO BE ASSIGNED BY USSR. MILITARY ASSURANCES DEMANDED. NOTE CLAIMS MAJOR US CITIES (LIST SEPARATE) ARE MINED WITH ATOMIC BOMBS WHICH THEY THREATEN TO SET OFF BY RADIO IF TERMS ARE NOT MET BY SIXTEEN HUNDRED FRIDAY EST."

Reynolds reread it—"SIXTEEN HUNDRED FRIDAY"—two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, local time. Our cities booby-trapped with A-bombs? Could they do that? He realized that LaMott was speaking. "We must assume that the threat is real. Our free organization makes it an obvious line of attack."

The admiral said, "They may be bluffing."

The air general shook his head. "They know the President won't surrender. We can't assume that Ivan is stupid."

Reynolds wondered why he was being allowed to hear this. LaMott looked at him. "Admiral Keithley and I leave for Washington at once. I have delayed to ask you this: your people set off an atom bomb. *Can they keep bombs from going off?*"

Reynolds felt his time sense stretch as if he had all year to think about Grandma Wilkins, Norman, his other paranormals. "Yes," he answered.

LaMott stood up. "Your job, Hanby. Coming, Admiral?"

"Wait!" protested Reynolds. "Give me one bomb and Mrs. Wilkins—and I'll sit on it. But how many cities? Twenty? Thirty?"

"Thirty-eight."

"Thirty-eight bombs—or more. Where are they? What do they look like? How long will this go on? It's impossible."

"Of course—but do it anyhow. Or try. Hanby, tell them we're on our way, will you?"

"Certainly, General."

"Good-by, Doctor. Or so long, rather."

Reynolds suddenly realized that these two were going back to "sit" on one of the bombs, to continue their duties until it killed them. He said quickly, "We'll try. We'll certainly try."

Thirty-eight cities . . . forty-three hours . . . and seventeen adepts. Others were listed in years of research, but they were scattered through forty-one states. In a dictatorship, secret police would locate them at once, deliver them at supersonic speeds. But this was America.

Find them! Get them here! *Fast!* Hanby assigned Colonel Hammond to turn Reynolds' wishes into orders and directed his security officer to delegate his duties, get on the phone and use his acquaintance with the F.B.I., with other security officers, and through them with local police, to cut red tape and *find those paranormals.* Find them, convince them, bring pressure, start them winging toward the proving ground. By sundown, twenty three had been found, eleven had been convinced or coerced, two had arrived. Hanby phoned Reynolds, caught him eating a sandwich standing up. "Hanby speaking. The President just phoned."

"The President?"

"La Mott got in to see him. He's dubious, but he's authorized an all-out try, short of slowing down conventional defense. One of his assistants left National Airport by jet plane half an hour ago to come here and help. Things will move faster."

But it did not speed things up, as the Russian broadcast was even then being beamed, making the crisis public; the President went on the air thirty minutes later. Reynolds did not hear him; he was busy. Twenty people to save twenty cities—and a world. But how? He was sure that Mrs. Wilkins could smother any A-bomb she had seen; he hoped the others could. But a hidden bomb in a far-off city—find it mentally, think about it, quench it, not for the microsecond it took to set one off, but for billions of microseconds it might take to uncover it—was it possible?

What could help? Certain drugs—caffeine, benzedrine. They must have quiet, too. He turned to Hammond. "I want a room and bath for each one."

"You've got that."

"No, we're doubled up, with semi-private baths."

Hammond shrugged. "Can do. It means booting out some brass."

"Keep the kitchen manned. They must not sleep, but they'll have to eat. Fresh coffee all the time and cokes and tea—anything they want. Can you put the room phones through a private switchboard?"

"Okay. What else?"

"I don't know. We'll talk to them."

They all knew of the Russian broadcast, but not what was being planned; they met his words with uneasy silence. Reynolds turned to Andrews. "Well, Two-Gun?"

"Big bite to chew, Prof."

"Yes. Can you chew it?"

"Have to, I reckon."

"Norman?"

"Gee, Boss! How can I when I can't see 'em?"

"Mrs. Wilkins couldn't see that bomb this morning. You can't see radioactivity on a watch dial; it's too small. You just see the dial and think about it. Well?"

The Negro lad scowled. "Think of a shiny ball in a city somewhere?"

"Yes. No, wait—Colonel Hammond, they need a visual image and it won't be that. There are atom bombs here—they must *see* one."

Hammond frowned. "An American bomb meant for dropping or firing won't look like a Russian bomb rigged for placement and radio triggering."

"What will they look like?"

"G-2 ought to know. I hope. We'll get some sort of picture. A three-dimensional mock-up, too. I'd better find Withers and the General." He left.

Mrs. Wilkins said briskly, "Doctor, I'll watch Washington, D. C."

"Yes, Mrs. Wilkins. You're the only one who has been tested, even in reverse. So you guard Washington; it's of prime importance."

"No, no, that's not why. It's the city I can *see* best."

Andrews said, "She's got something, Prof. I pick Seattle."

By midnight Reynolds had his charges, twenty-six by now, tucked away in the officers' club. Hammond and he took turns at a switchboard rigged in the upper hall. The watch would not start until shortly before deadline. Fatigue reduced paranormal powers, sometimes to zero; Reynolds hoped that they were getting one last night of sleep.

A microphone had been installed in each room; a selector switch let them listen in. Reynolds disliked this but Hammond argued, "Sure, it's an invasion of privacy. So is being blown up by an A-bomb." He dialed the switch. "Hear that? Our boy Norman is sawing wood." He moved it again. "Private 'Two-Gun' is still stirring. We can't let them sleep, once it starts, so we have to spy on them."

"I suppose so."

Withers came upstairs. "Anything more you need?"

"I guess not," answered Reynolds. "How about the bomb mock-up?"

"Before morning."

"How authentic is it?"

"Hard to say. Their agents probably rigged firing circuits from radio parts bought right here; the circuits

could vary a lot. But the business part—well, we're using real plutonium."

"Good. We'll show it to them after breakfast."

Two-Gun's door opened. "Howdy, Colonel. Prof—it's there."

"What is?"

"The bomb. Under Seattle. I can feel it."

"Where is it?"

"It's down—it *feels* down. And it feels wet, somehow. Would they put it in the Sound?"

Hammond jumped up. "In the harbor—and shower the city with radioactive water!" He was ringing as he spoke. "Get me General Hanby!"

"Morrison here," a voice answered. "What is it, Hammond?"

"The Seattle bomb—have them dredge for it. It's in the Sound, or somewhere under water."

"Eh? How do you know?"

"One of Reynolds' magicians. Do it!" He cut off.

Andrews said worriedly, "Prof, I can't *see* it—I'm not a 'seeing-eye.' Why don't you get one? Say that little Mrs. Brentano?"

"Oh, my God! Clairvoyants—we need them, too."

Withers said, "Eh, Doctor? Do you think—"

"No, I don't, or I would have thought of it. How do they search for bombs? What instruments?"

"Instruments? A bomb in its shielding doesn't even affect a Geiger counter. You have to open things and look."

"How long will that take? Say for New York!"

Hammond said, "Shut up! Reynolds, where are these clairvoyants?"

Reynolds chewed his lip. "They're scarce."

"Scarcer than us dice rollers," added Two-Gun. "But get that Brentano kid. She found keys I had lost digging a ditch. Buried three feet deep—and me searching my quarters."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Brentano." Reynolds pulled out a notebook.

Hammond reached for the switchboard. "Morrison? Stand by for more names—and even more urgent than the others."

More urgent but harder to find; the Panic was on. The President urged everyone to keep cool and stay home, whereupon thirty million people stampeded. The ticker in the P.I.O. office typed the story: "NEW YORK NY—TO CLEAR JAM CAUSED BY WRECKS IN OUTBOUND TUBE THE INBOUND TUBE OF HOLLAND TUNNEL HAS BEEN REVERSED. POLICE HAVE STOPPED TRYING TO PREVENT EVACUATION. BULLDOZERS WORKING TO REOPEN TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE, BLADES SHOVING WRECKED CARS AND HUMAN HAMBURGER. WEEHAWKEN FERRY DISASTER CONFIRMED: NO PASSENGER LIST YET—FLASH—GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE GAVE WAY AT 0353 EST, WHETHER FROM OVERLOAD OR SABOTAGE NOT KNOWN. MORE MORE MORE—FLASH—"

It was repeated everywhere. The Denver–Colorado Springs highway had one hundred thirty-five deaths by midnight, then reports stopped. A DC-6 at Burbank ploughed into a mob which had broken through the barrier. The Baltimore–Washington highway was clogged both ways; Memorial Bridge was out of service. The five outlets from Los Angeles were solid with creeping cars. At four A.M. EST the President declared martial law; the order had no immediate effect.

By morning Reynolds had thirty-one adepts assigned to twenty-four cities. He had a stomach-churning ordeal before deciding to let them work only cities known to them. The gambler, Even-Money Karsch, had settled it: "Doc, I know when I'm hot. Minneapolis *has* to be mine." Reynolds gave in, even though one of his students had just arrived from there; he put them both on it and prayed that at least one would be "hot." Two clairvoyants arrived; one, a blind newsdealer from Chicago, was put to searching there; the other, a carnie mentalist, was given

the list and told to find bombs wherever she could. Mrs. Brentano had remarried and moved; Norfolk was being combed for her.

At one fifteen P.M., forty-five minutes before deadline, they were in their rooms, each with maps and aerial views of the city, each with photos of the mocked-up bomb. The club was clear of residents; the few normals needed to coddle the paranormals kept carefully quiet. Roads nearby were blocked; air traffic was warned away. Everything was turned toward providing an atmosphere in which forty-two people could sit still and *think*.

At the switchboard were Hammond, Reynolds, and Gordon McClintock, the President's assistant. Reynolds glanced up. "What time is it?"

"One thirty-seven," rasped Hammond. "Twenty-three minutes."

"One thirty-eight," disagreed McClintock. "Reynolds, how about Detroit? You *can't* leave it unguarded."

"Whom can I use? Each is guarding the city he knows best."

"Those twin girls—I heard them mention Detroit."

"They've played everywhere. But Pittsburgh is their home."

"Switch one of them to Detroit."

Reynolds thought of telling him to go to Detroit himself. "They work together. You want to get them upset and lose both cities?"

Instead of answering McClintock said, "And who's watching Cleveland?"

"Norman Johnson. He lives here and he's our second strongest operator."

They were interrupted by voices downstairs. A man came up, carrying a bag, and spotted Reynolds. "Oh hello, Doctor. What is this? I'm on top priority work—tank production—when the F.B.I. grabs me. You are responsible?"

"Yes. Come with me." McClintock started to speak, but Reynolds led the man away. "Mr. Nelson, did you bring your family?"

"No, they're still in Detroit. Had I known—"

"Please! Listen carefully." He explained, pointed out a map of Detroit in the room to which they went, showed him pictures of the simulated bomb. "You understand?"

Nelson's jaw muscles were jumping. "It seems impossible."

"It *is* possible. You've got to think about that bomb—or bombs. Get in touch, squeeze them, keep them from going off. You'll have to stay awake."

Nelson breathed gustily. "I'll stay awake."

"That phone will get you anything you want. Good luck."

He passed the room occupied by the blind clairvoyant; the door was open. "Harry, it's Prof. Getting anything?"

The man turned to the voice. "It's in the Loop. I could walk to it if I were there. A six-story building."

"That's the best you can do?"

"Tell them to try the attic. I get warm when I go up."

"Right away!" He rushed back, saw that Hanby had arrived. Swiftly he keyed the communications office. "Reynolds speaking. The Chicago bomb is in a six-story building in the Loop area, probably in the attic. No—that's all. G'by!"

Hanby started to speak; Reynolds shook his head and looked at his watch. Silently the General picked up the phone. "This is the commanding officer. Have any flash sent here." He put the phone down and stared at his watch.

For fifteen endless minutes they stood silent. The general broke it by taking the phone and saying, "Hanby. Anything?"

"No, General. Washington is on the wire."

"Eh? You say Washington?"

"Yes, sir. Here's the General, Mr. Secretary."

Hanby sighed. "Hanby speaking, Mr. Secretary. You're all right? Washington . . . is all right?"

They could hear the relayed voice. "Certainly, certainly. We're past the deadline. But I wanted to tell you:

Radio Moscow is telling the world that our cities are in flames."

Hanby hesitated. "None of them are?"

"Certainly not. I've a talker hooked in to GHQ, which has an open line to every city listed. All safe. I don't know whether your freak people did any good but, one way or another, it was a false—" The line went dead.

Hanby's face went dead with it. He jiggled the phone. "I've been cut off!"

"Not here, General—at the other end. Just a moment."

They waited. Presently the operator said, "Sorry, sir. I can't get them to answer."

"Keep trying!"

It was slightly over a minute—it merely seemed longer—when the operator said, "Here's your party, sir."

"That you, Hanby?" came the voice. "I suppose we'll have phone troubles just as we had last time. Now, about these ESP people: while we are grateful and all that, nevertheless I suggest that nothing be released to the papers. Might be misinterpreted."

"Oh. Is that an order, Mr. Secretary?"

"Oh, no, no! But have such things routed through my office."

"Yes, sir." He cradled the phone.

McClintock said, "You shouldn't have rung off, General. I'd like to know whether the Chief wants this business continued."

"Suppose we talk about it on the way back to my office." The General urged him away, turned and gave Reynolds a solemn wink.

Trays were placed outside the doors at six o'clock; most of them sent for coffee during the evening. Mrs. Wilkins ordered tea; she kept her door open and chatted with anyone who passed. Harry the newsboy was searching Milwaukee; no answer had been received from his tip about Chicago. Mrs. Ekstein, or "Princess Cathay" as she was billed, had reported a "feeling" about a house trailer in Denver and was now poring over a map of New Orleans. With the passing of the deadline, panic abated;

communications were improving. The American people were telling each other that they had known that those damned commies were bluffing.

Hammond and Reynolds sent for more coffee at three A.M.; Reynolds' hand trembled as he poured. Hammond said, "You haven't slept for two nights. Get over on that divan."

"Neither have you."

"I'll sleep when you wake up."

"I *can't* sleep. I'm worrying about what'll happen when *they* get sleepy." He gestured at the line of doors.

"So am I."

At seven A.M. Two-Gun came out. "Prof, they got it. The bomb. It's gone. Like closing your hand on nothing."

Hammond grabbed the phone. "Get me Seattle—the F.B.I. office."

While they waited, Two-Gun said, "What now, Prof?"

Reynolds tried to think. "Maybe you should rest."

"Not until this is over. Who's got Toledo? I know that burg."

"Uh . . . young Barnes."

Hammond was connected; he identified himself, asked the question. He put the phone down gently. "They *did* get it," he whispered. "It was in the lake."

"I told you it was wet," agreed Two-Gun. "Now, about Toledo—"

"Well . . . tell me when you've got it and we'll let Barnes rest."

McClintock rushed in at seven thirty-five, followed by Hanby. "Doctor Reynolds! Colonel Hammond!"

"*Sh!* Quiet! You'll disturb them."

McClintock said in a lower voice, "Yes, surely—I was excited. This is important. They located a bomb in Seattle and—"

"Yes. Private Andrews told us."

"Huh? How did *he* know?"

"Never mind," Hanby intervened. "The point is, they found the bomb already triggered. Now we *know* that your people are protecting the cities."

"Was there any doubt?"

"Well . . . yes."

"But there isn't now," McClintock added. "I must take over." He bent over the board. "Communications? Put that White House line through here."

"Just what," Reynolds said slowly, "do you mean by 'take over'?"

"Eh? Why, take charge on behalf of the President. Make sure these people don't let down an instant!"

"But what do you propose to *do!*"

Hanby said hastily. "Nothing, Doctor. We'll just keep in touch with Washington from here."

They continued the vigil together; Reynolds spent the time hating McClintock's guts. He started to take coffee, then decided on another benzedrine tablet instead. He hoped his people were taking enough of it—and not too much. They all had it, except Grandma Wilkins, who wouldn't touch it. He wanted to check with them but knew that he could not—each bomb was bound only by a thread of thought; a split-split second of diversion might be enough.

The outside light flashed; Hanby took the call. "Congress has recessed," he announced, "and the President is handing the Soviet Union a counter ultimatum; locate and disarm any bombs or be bombed in return." The light flashed again; Hanby answered. His face lit up. "Two more found," he told them. "One in Chicago, right where your man said; the other in Camden."

"Camden? How?"

"They rounded up the known Communists, of course. This laddie was brought back there for questioning. He didn't like that; he knew that he was being held less than a mile from the bomb. Who is on Camden?"

"Mr. Dimwiddy."

"The elderly man with the bunions?"

"That's right—retired postman. General, do we assume that there is only one bomb per city?"

McClintock answered, "Of course not! These people must—"

Hanby cut in, "Central Intelligence is assuming so, ex-

cept for New York and Washington. If they had more bombs here, they would have added more cities."

Reynolds left to take Dimwiddy off watch. McClintock, he fumed, did not realize that people were flesh and blood.

Dimwiddy was unsurprised. "A while ago the pressure let up, then—well, I'm afraid I dozed. I had a terrible feeling that I had let it go off, then I knew it hadn't." Reynolds told him to rest, then be ready to help out elsewhere. They settled on Philadelphia; Dimwiddy had once lived there.

The watch continued. Mrs. Ekstein came up with three hits, but no answers came back; Reynolds still had to keep those cities covered. She then complained that her "sight" had gone; Reynolds went to her room and told her to nap, not wishing to consult McClintock.

Luncheon trays came and went. Reynolds continued worrying over how to arrange his operators to let them rest. Forty-three people and thirty-five cities—if only he had two for every city! Maybe any of them could watch any city? No, he could not chance it.

Barnes woke up and took back Toledo; that left Two-Gun free. Should he let him take Cleveland? Norman had had no relief and Two-Gun had once been through it, on a train. The colored boy was amazing but rather hysterical, whereas Two-Gun—well, Reynolds felt that Two-Gun would last, even through a week of no sleep.

No! He couldn't trust Cleveland to a man who had merely passed through it. But with Dimwiddy on Philadelphia, when Mary Gifford woke he could put her on Houston and that would let Hank sleep before shifting him to Indianapolis and that would let him—

A chess game, with all pawns queens and no mistakes allowed.

McClintock was twiddling the selector switch, listening in. Suddenly he snapped, "Someone is asleep!"

Reynolds checked the number.

"Of course, that's the twins' room; they take turns.

You may hear snores in 21 and 30 and 8 and 19. It's okay; they're off watch."

"Well, all right." McClintock seemed annoyed.

Reynolds bent back to his list. Shortly McClintock snorted, "Who's in room 12?"

"Uh? Wait—that's Norman Johnson, Cleveland."

"You mean he's on watch?"

"Yes." Reynolds could hear the boy's asthmatic breathing, felt relieved.

"He's asleep!"

"No, he's not."

But McClintock was rushing down the corridor. Reynolds took after him; Hammond and Hanby followed. Reynolds caught up as McClintock burst into room 12. Norman was sprawled in a chair, eyes closed in his habitual attitude. McClintock rushed up, slapped him. "Wake up!"

Reynolds grabbed McClintock. "You bloody fool!"

Norman opened his eyes, then burst into tears. "It's *gone!*"

"Steady, Norman. It's all right."

"No, no! It's gone—and my mammy's gone with it!"

McClintock snapped, "Concentrate, boy! Get back on it!"

Reynolds turned on him. "Get out. Get out before I punch you."

Hanby and Hammond were in the door; the General cut in with a hoarse whisper. "Pipe down, Doctor; bring the boy."

Back at the board the outside light was flashing. Hanby took the call while Reynolds tried to quiet the boy. Hanby listened gravely, then said, "He's right. Cleveland just got it."

McClintock snapped, "He went to sleep. He ought to be shot."

"Shut up," said Hanby.

"But—"

Reynolds said, "Any others, General?"

"Why would there be?"

"All this racket. It may have disturbed a dozen of them."

"Oh, we'll see." He called Washington again. Presently he sighed. "No, just Cleveland. We were . . . lucky."

"General," McClintock insisted, "he was asleep."

Hanby looked at him. "Sir, you may be the President's deputy, but you yourself have no military authority. Off my post."

"But I am directed by the President to—"

"Off my post, sir! Go back to Washington. *Or to Cleveland.*"

McClintock looked dumbfounded. Hanby added, "You're worse than bad—you're a fool."

"The President will hear of this."

"Blunder again and the President won't live that long. Get out."

By nightfall the situation was rapidly getting worse. Twenty-seven cities were still threatened and Reynolds was losing operators faster than bombs were being found. Even-Money Karsch would not relieve when awakened. "See that?" he said, rolling dice. "Cold as a well-digger's feet. I'm through." After that Reynolds tested each one who was about to relieve, found that some were tired beyond the power of short sleep to restore them—they were "cold."

By midnight there were eighteen operators for nineteen cities. The twins he had fearfully split up; it had worked. Mrs. Wilkins was holding both Washington and Baltimore; she had taken Baltimore when he had no one to relieve there.

But now he had no one for relief anywhere and three operators—Nelson, Two-Gun, and Grandma Wilkins—had had no rest. He was too fagged to worry; he simply knew that whenever one of them reached his limit, the United States would lose a city. The panic had resumed after the bombing of Cleveland; roads again were choked. The disorder made harder the search for bombs. But there was nothing he could do.

Mrs. Ekstein still complained about her sight but kept

at it. Harry the newsboy had had no luck with Milwaukee, but there was no use shifting him; other cities were "dark" to him. During the night Mrs. Ekstein pointed to the bomb in Houston. It was, she said, in a box underground. A coffin? Yes, there was a headstone; she was unable to read the name.

Thus, many recent dead in Houston were disturbed. But it was nine Sunday morning before Reynolds went to tell Mary Gifford that she could rest—or relieve for Wilmington, if she felt up to it. He found her collapsed and lifted her onto the bed, wondering if she had known the Houston bomb was found.

Eleven cities now and eight people. Grandma Wilkins held four cities. No one else had been able to double up. Reynolds thought dully that it was a miracle that they had been able to last at all; it surpassed enormously the best test performance.

Hammond looked up as he returned. "Make any changes?"

"No. The Gifford kid is through. We'll lose half a dozen cities before this is over."

"Some of them must be damn near empty by now."

"I hope so. Any more bombs found?"

"Not yet. How do you feel, Doc?"

"Three weeks dead." Reynolds sat down wearily. He was wondering if he should wake some of those sleeping and test them again when he heard a noise below; he went to the stairwell.

Up came an M.P. captain. "They said to bring her here."

Reynolds looked at the woman with him. "Dorothy Brentano!"

"Dorothy Smith now."

He controlled his trembling and explained what was required. She nodded. "I figured that out on the plane. Got a pencil? Take this: St. Louis—a river warehouse with a sign reading 'Bartlett & Sons, Jobbers.' Look in the loft. And Houston—no, they got that one. Baltimore—it's in a ship at the docks, the S.S. *Gold Coast*. What

other cities? I've wasted time feeling around where there was nothing to find."

Reynolds was already shouting for Washington to answer.

Grandma Wilkins was last to be relieved; Dorothy located one in the Potomac—and Mrs. Wilkins told her sharply to keep trying. There were four bombs in Washington, which Mrs. Wilkins had known all along. Dorothy found them in eleven minutes.

Three hours later Reynolds showed up in the club messroom, not having been able to sleep. Several of his people were eating and listening to the radio blast about our raid on Russia. He gave it a wide berth; they could blast Omsk and Tomsk and Minsk and Pinsk; today he didn't care. He was sipping milk and thinking that he would never drink coffee again, when Captain Mikeler bent over his table. "The General wants you. Hurry!"

"Why?"

"I said, 'Hurry!' Where's Grandma Wilkins—oh—I see her. Who is Mrs. Dorothy Smith?"

Reynolds looked around. "She's with Mrs. Wilkins."

Mikeler rushed them to Hanby's office. Hanby merely said, "Sit over there. And you ladies, too. Stay in focus."

Reynolds found himself looking into a television screen at the President of the United States. He looked as weary as Reynolds felt, but he turned on his smile. "You are Doctor Reynolds?"

"Yes, Mr. President!"

"These ladies are Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

The President said quietly, "You three and your colleagues will be thanked by the Republic. And by me, for myself. But that must wait. Mrs. Smith, there are more bombs—in Russia. Could your strange gift find them there?"

"Why, I don't—I can try!"

"Mrs. Wilkins, could you set off those Russian bombs while they are still far away?"

Incredibly, she was still bright-eyed and chipper. "Why, Mr. President!"

"Can you?"

She got a far-away look. "Dorothy and I had better have a quiet room somewhere. And I'd like a pot of tea. A large pot."

If this story does not speak for itself, let the reader ask if possibly his mind is like that of its hero.

PREPOSTEROUS

by Fredric Brown

MR. WEATHERWAX BUTTERED HIS TOAST carefully. His voice was firm. "My dear," he said, "I want it definitely understood that there shall be no more trashy reading around this apartment."

"Yes, Jason. I did not know—"

"Of course you didn't. But it is your *responsibility* to know what our son reads."

"I shall watch more closely, Jason. I did not see the magazine when he brought it in. I did not know it was here."

"Nor would I have known had I not, after I came in last night, accidentally happened to displace one of the pillows on the sofa. The periodical was hidden under it, and of course I glanced through it."

The points of Mr. Weatherwax's mustache quivered with indignation. "Such utterly ridiculous concepts, such impossibly wild ideas. *Astounding Stories,* indeed!"

He took a sip of his coffee to calm himself.

"Such inane and utterly preposterous tripe," he said. "Travel to other galaxies by means of space warps, what-

ever they are. Time machines, teleportation, and telekinesis. Balderdash, sheer balderdash."

"My dear Jason," said his wife, this time with just the faintest touch of asperity, "I assure you I shall watch Gerald's reading closely hereafter. I fully agree with you."

"Thank you, my dear," Mr. Weatherwax said, more kindly. "The minds of the young should not be poisoned by such wild imaginings."

He glanced at his watch and rose hastily, kissed his wife and left.

Outside the apartment door he stepped into the antigravity shaft and floated gently down two hundred-odd floors to street level where he was lucky enough to catch an atomcab immediately. "Moonport," he snapped to the robot driver, and then sat back and closed his eyes to catch the telepathecast. He'd hoped to catch a bulletin on the Fourth Martian War but it was only another routine report from Immortality Center, so he quirtled.

Most telepaths agree that they must not be Peeping Toms, invading the minds of others uninvited; nor should they use their gifts in ways that might hurt another human being. This being generally true, the fearful reaction of most "normals" to the telepath are usually unfounded.

But, alas, not all telepaths are so ethical. Psionic gifts are not always the fruit of spiritual evolvement. Here is a tale involving some of the more earthy problems that might arise with the advent of widespread extrasensory power.

MODUS VIVENDI

by Walter Bupp

BY THE TIME I GOT TO THE OFFICE, I WAS jittery as a new bride. The day started out all wrong. I worked out with the weights—they felt as heavy as the Pyramids. And when I walked from the subway to the building where Mike Renner and I have our offices, an obvious telepath tailed me all the way.

I was ready for a scrap. St. Francis himself would have irritated the hell out of me, and I'd have gone speechless with rage at the mere sight of sweet Alice Ben Bolt. The

guy sitting with Mike in our law library didn't have a chance.

"What's this?" I growled, seeing Mike seated silent and staring at our caller across the big table. There wasn't a book or sheet of foolscap resting on the walnut. Work hadn't started. They were lying in wait for me. Well, I was lying in wait for the first guy who opened his mouth.

"The Grievance Committee!" Mike said in a tone of stifled fury. "This is Horace Dunn."

"Carpe Diem." I snarled at Horace, a hammered-down heavyweight. "What's Renner done now?"

"Me?" Renner demanded, letting his fat jowls quiver. He's one of these burly types who looks like he should be playing pro ball and instead thrives on showing clients how to keep two sets of books while staying out of jail.

"Not Renner," Horace said. "You, Maragon. The Bar Association gets upset when reputable attorneys successfully defend one of these Stigma cases."

"Forgive me my hobbies," I sneered, sitting down beside my partner. "But I try to win them all. You know I didn't seek that business—Judge Passarelli appointed me Public Defender when that Psi, Crescas, bleated that he was destitute."

Mike Renner apparently decided one of us had to be reasonable. "Coincidence, Dunn," he said. "Pure coincidence. You can't hold it against—"

"No coincidence," I snapped. It wasn't my day to agree with anybody. Renner's fat little eyes opened wide.

"Judge Passarelli *knew* I'd be in his courtroom," I said. "His Honor wanted to get my views on a point I'd made in that pleading the previous week."

"Passarelli *again!*" Horace breathed. "Well, well. What do you know? And two weeks ago he found a Stigma case named Mary Hall 'Not Guilty' of a bunco game against the Ninety-ninth National Bank. You know the case?"

Renner was too upset for speech. He shook his head, looking over at me. I didn't give him the satisfaction. Mike hasn't any patience with my interest in keeping abreast of Psi developments anyway.

"This Mary Hall is a hallucinator," Horace said. He

leaned forward and gave it to us in not much more than a whisper. "This witch used her HC to pass five-dollar bills off as hundreds, getting change. But they caught her at it." He laughed harshly. "And tried her for it," he added. "Get the picture on that 'Not Guilty' verdict?"

"No," Renner admitted. I slouched down, scowling.

"She used HC on Judge Passarelli, too. Foozled his vision, whatever you want to call it. When the 'cutor handed him the evidence, the five-dollar bill she had tried to pass for a hundred, all sealed up in plastic, Passarelli *saw a hundred,* thanks to her Psi powers."

"Get out of here," I told Horace, getting to my feet.

"Pete! For heaven's sake!" Mike protested. You didn't talk like that to the Grievance Committee. Did you ever see a guy wring his hands? Renner was pathetic.

"Can't you quit pussy-footing around, Renner?" I growled. "This comic isn't from the Grievance Committee!"

Horace Dunn paled on that one. "How do you know that?" he said. He sounded a lot more dangerous.

"Too polite," I sneered. "And it ill becomes you. What's going on?"

"So I level," Horace conceded. "So I'm *not* from the Grievance Committee, and I'm not all hot that Maragon defended Keys Crescas."

"Much better," I said, sitting down again.

"This guy Passarelli is coming up for re-election shortly," our caller said. A light began to dawn. "We're making sure he doesn't make it—and that *our* man does."

My laugh was more a bark. "He can't find Mary Hall," I told Renner.

Horace's lower jaw shot out at me. "I don't like guys who know what I'm thinking!" he snapped.

I had to laugh in his face. "Who needs TP? You want to tar Passarelli with the brush of Psi—and this hallucinator would be Exhibit 'A.'"

He subsided. "So I can't find her. What then?"

I shook my head. "You say it," I suggested. "Too early to have to wash my mouth with soap."

Dunn made his big pitch to Renner. "Maragon has a connection with these Psis—it's all over town that he got

Keys Crescas off. This Crescas can find Mary Hall—you know how Psis stick together." Renner nodded rapt agreement. "And," Dunn added, finally sticking it in us, "it would be good politics for Maragon to do it—would kind of sweeten up the stench of his getting Crescas off, eh?"

Renner thought he had to sell me: "Pete," he insisted. "You've *got* to! Defending Crescas was sure to hurt our reputation. That girl has it coming for—"

I waved a hand in his face, shutting him up. "Why should I care what happens to the girl?" I said, getting up. "Just make sure Horace pays us a fat fee. After all, it's tax exempt."

"Tax exempt?" he asked, frowning.

"Sure," I said, walking out. "Religious contribution. Thirty pieces of silver."

Keys Crescas is the kind of oddball you can't find till after dark. Good-looking in a romantic, off-beat sort of way. No visible means of support—a typical Psi. Renner made one white-jowled attempt to read me the riot act for failing to plead him guilty when Passarelli had tapped me as Public Defender. I came close to throwing the meatball out of my private office.

What could I have done? Sure, Crescas has the Stigma—he doesn't try to hide it. It's only TK, though, and I don't suppose much of that. Just enough, the cops will tell you, to make him a good man at picking locks, which earned him his nickname—Keys.

People like Crescas run to a pattern. I left my number in about ten of the spots he might turn up, and around six o'clock one of them hit pay dirt.

I pressed the "Accept" key when the phone rang, and Keys Crescas' olive face and curly black hair filled the screen. His black eyes had that lively watchfulness you associate with Psis. He had the gain way down and the aperture wide, so that he wasn't in focus any farther back than his ears. And that 'scope setting hid from where he was calling as effectively as a veil. Did you ever know a Psi who didn't seem to be harboring a secret?

"Hi, Mouthpiece," he grinned, showing even white teeth. "How'd you know where to find me?"

"Best place for worms is under a manure pile," I said. "I used parallel logic."

That took that smug, Stigma grin off his puss. "What do you want?" he asked, sullen now.

"A lead to a Psi who's gone into hiding."

You know what he told me to do. "Mary Hall," I added. "She's got Stigma Troubles."

"Not even counting you, eh?" Crescas sneered. He made the same suggestion again. I let it ride. "Go on," he dared me. "Make your pitch. I'll laugh later."

"That 'Not Guilty' verdict doesn't mean a thing, Crescas," I told him. "That was a National Bank she tried to rob. There's a Federal rap still to be settled. She has big Stigma troubles and needs counsel—and not one of those shysters who hang around the Criminal Courts building sniffing for Psi business."

"She's in no trouble till they find her," he said accurately, and I could see his hand come up to cut the image. "For my dough they've given up trying to find her and are using you for a stalking horse," he added with fiendish accuracy.

"So don't trust me," I snarled. "You can send her saw blades baked in a cake." I reached up, too.

"Hold it."

I stopped, trying to keep my glower going.

"Passarelli would have to be in on it, too," he decided. "And I can't figure *him* for a louse. O.K., Maragon. I'll pick you up at your office at about eight o'clock."

With nearly two hours to kill, I went out to eat. I still felt glum and lousy. Part of it was the knifelike penetration of Crescas' intuition—his knowing that I was just a stalking horse so that the big guns could zero in on Mary Hall. And there was that little tremor of fear that comes from knowing that a Psi may think you've double-crossed him. They have some powerful abilities when it comes to exacting vengeance. Well, if everything about the deal was as much screwed up as the part I had heard so far, I decided I might get out with a whole skin at that.

That was my attempt at consolation—that and an order of sweetbreads *Financière*, which is a ridiculous dish for a sawed-off shyster tending toward overweight.

I was back in the law library by ten minutes of eight, trying to occupy my mind with the latest *Harvard Law Review*, when the phone rang. Keys' face, a little tight-lipped and bright-eyed, peered at me from the screen, which it completely filled. He must have darned near swallowed the scope.

"Ready?" he asked softly.

"Sure. You picking me up?"

His lip curled in half a smile. "What do I look like?" he sneered. "Grab a cab. You know a bar called the Moldy Fig?" I nodded. "That's where." He cut the image.

Well, this was more like it. You can't deal with Psis without the whole affair acting like something out of E. Phillips Oppenheim. I closed up the office, turned out the ceiling, and rode the elevator down to the street.

The night howled and shrieked with airborne traffic. A hot-rodding kid gunned his fans up the street a way and ripped what silence might have remained to the night into shreds as he streaked past me. The jerk wasn't forty feet off the ground, and was pouring the coal to his turbine. The whine of his impellers sounded a strong down-Doppler as he ripped past me, nose dropped a good thirty degrees and dragging every knot he could get out of his copter.

I waved to a cab standing at the rank up the block a way and watched the skim-copter rise a couple inches off the ground as the hacker skimmed on the ground-cushion toward me. City grit cut at my ankles from the air blast before I could hop into the bubble and give him my destination. He looked the question at me hopefully, over his shoulder, his hand on the arm of his meter.

"Oh, what the hell," I said, still sore at the world, and a little worried about what I was trying to do. "Let's copter!" He grinned and swung the arm over to the "fly" position with its four-times-higher rate. His turbine screamed to a keener pitch with wide throttle, and he climbed full-bore into the downtown slow lane.

The swift ride down to the Village was long enough to

induce that odd motion-hypnosis so common in night flight over a metropolitan area. The dizzy blur of red and green running lights from airborne traffic at levels above and below us, the shapes of copters silhouetted beneath us against the lambent glow of the city's well-lit streets, all wove into a numbing pattern.

"Here's the *Fig*, Mac," the hacker said as we grounded. I stuck my credit card in the meter and hopped out, not fast enough to duck the fan-driven pin-pricks of sand as he pulled away.

Crescas appeared as if by magic—Psis act like that—and had me by the arm. "Quick!" he said, pushing me back into the spot he had appeared from. It was a doorway beside the Moldy Fig, opening on a flight of steps running to an apartment above the bar. As we climbed the clean and well-lit stairs, I reminded myself that I was probably entering a den of Psis—and clamped down tight on my thoughts. There was plenty they had better not peep.

Keys didn't have to knock on the door—there's always a telepath hanging around these Stigma hideouts who knows who's coming. A husky young man, quite blond and pink of face, opened the door. A soft rustle of music spilled out around his big shoulders. He wore a T-shirt, and his powerful forearms were bare.

"Hey!" he said to Keys, spotting himself as a Southerner as surely as if he'd had the Stars and Bars tattooed on his forehead. We followed him down a short hall into a room furnished with a couple of couches, an easy-chair, several small but delightful tables, and a piano. Here was the music. A blond bombshell was drumming box chords on the ivories, and grouped around her on side chairs were four young men, playing with her. It was jazz, if that's what you call the quiet racket that comes out of a wooden recorder, a very large pottery ocharina that hooted like a gallon jug, a steel guitar, and a pair of bongo drums played discreetly with the fingertips.

My appearance stopped them right in the middle of a chorus of "Muskrat Ramble." I'd have liked to hear more—it was Dixieland times two—what the Psis call Psixieland. That's jazz played by a gang of telepaths. Each one

knows what the others are about to play. The result is extemporaneous counterpoint, but without the clinkers we associate with jazz. Almost too perfect, yet untrammeled.

My eyes ran around the room as the four men who had been playing with the girl got up and prepared to leave. The place was spotless. Oh, the furnishings weren't costly, but they were chosen with that sense of fitness, of refinement of color and decor that is curiously Psi. I suppose that's one of the little things that annoys Normals so much. Stigma powers seem to go beyond telepathy, clairvoyance, and telekinesis—they extend in some hard-to-define way into the aesthetic. A chaste kind of cleanliness is only part of it. *Taste,* I guess that's the word. Their attire, their homes, everything about Psis, seems tasteful.

In moments only Keys, the blond Southerner, and the still blonder bomb on the piano bench were left to face me. Keys poked a finger at the plow-jockey in the T-shirt. "Elmer," he explained.

"Take off yo' hat, Yankee," Elmer grinned. I felt it tipped from my head by his TK.

I glowered at him. "Kid stuff!" I snorted. "So you can lift four ounces from six feet away. But you don't have any idea what incorporeal hereditaments are. Which is better?"

The pink of his face got red. He could have broken me in two.

"Just making a point," I said. "I'm stupid about TK. You're stupid about the law. I figure that makes us even."

He clamped his mouth shut. I turned back to Keys and the girl I was sure was Mary Hall. "What I came here for—"

"What we *got* you here for," Keys interrupted, "was to set you straight on something." I guess I looked as surprised as I felt. The impossibly blond girl giggled. "Over the phone, Maragon," Keys went on, sitting down on the bench beside the girl, "you said there was a Federal rap hanging over Mary's head on this Ninety-ninth National Bank fracas."

I nodded.

"The theory being," he went on, "that the law doesn't

let anybody with the Stigma get away with a thing, right?"

"Then relax. Mary hasn't got the Stigma. Have you, Mary?"

"No," she said. I looked her over more carefully. She was closer to twenty than thirty, round-faced, with blue eyes that were about as impossibly bright as her hair was impossibly white. It could have been a corneal tattoo, but somehow I doubted it. Impossibly red lips made up the patriotic triad of colors—but that was lipstick, pure and simple.

"No Stigma?" I demanded. "I know Psixieland when I hear it, Miss Hall. Don't tell me that wasn't telepathic jazz."

She tossed her short hair-do around. "My side-men were TP's," she conceded. "Why do you think I was playing box chords? They knew what I was playing—I didn't know what they'd play."

Well, some of it was adding up. Still, I had to be sure. "I see. Tell me, Mary, where were your parents on the nineteenth of April in '75?"

She sat up straight beside Keys on the bench, and her fair face flushed pinkly. "Drop dead!" she told me.

I stood up. "See you in jail," I said, and started for the door.

Elmer had played tackle for Ol' Miss—he sure stopped me in my tracks. "I reckon we ain't through with you yet, Yankee," he grinned. He hurt me with his hands, big as country hams. My stiffened fingers jabbed his T-shirt where it covered his solar plexus, and he dropped back, gasping.

"You could learn a little about fighting, too, Psi," I growled. "And you're through with me if that bottle blonde won't answer my questions."

"Hey!" Keys protested. "Come on, relax. Everybody!" he snapped, as Elmer got his breath back and came in for another tackle. I signaled for a fair catch, and he eased up.

I peered over my shoulder at the girl at the piano. "Well?" I asked her. "Where *were* your parents on the nineteenth of April in '75?"

Her eyes sought out Keys'. He nodded, dropping his gaze to the floor. "About fifty miles from Logan, Iowa," she said.

"And you don't have the Stigma?" I scoffed.

"Not everybody inside the Logan Ring was affected," she reminded me. "Which is my tough luck. But I *am* being crucified because Mother and Dad *were* in the Ring the day the N-bomb went off, whether I have the Stigma or not."

I came back to stand in front of her. "I'm an attorney," I said. "I have an idea what can happen to you if the Courts get hold of you. Right now they can't find you —which must mean you've been hiding." She confirmed that with a nod, biting her red, red lips. "They *are* after you, and a Federal rap is just the start," I said. "You have only one chance, Mary, and I'm glad you claimed it. The only way you can keep them from putting you over a barrel is to prove you don't have the Stigma. I think I know a way to do it. Are you ready to let me help you?"

"Not *that* fast," she said, looking worried. "Oh, I trust Keys' judgment about you. Yes, I *do*," she said earnestly, turning to Crescas. "Yes, I *know* he got you off, Keys. But it doesn't sound right. Why should he take a chance helping a Psi—even if I really *don't* have the Stigma? What's his angle?"

"Fair enough," Keys said. "How about it, Maragon?"

"I knew it was a bum rap they were trying to pin on Mary as soon as I heard about it," I explained. "This business about Mary having HC. There just isn't any such Psi power as hallucination, and every one of you know it —it's an old wives' tale. I wouldn't touch this little lady with a ten-foot pole if I really thought she had the Stigma. I have a living to make around this town—and you can't handle Stigma business and get any decent trade, too."

I looked back at Mary. "How *did* you work your swindle at the bank?" I asked quietly.

She sighed. "Sleight of hand," she said. "A damned fool stunt. I figured to put the money back in a day or so. If somebody else hadn't been working the same racket, they'd never have caught me. But they had set a trap—"

"I *thought* it was some light-finger stuff," I grinned. "Well, it will take me a while to set up a real test of your Psi Powers. Where can I reach you—or are you spending the night here?"

"Certainly not!" she said, casting an annoyed glance at Elmer. She looked at her watch. "Would it be much longer than an hour? I might still be here, if Elmer—"

"Jes' fine," T-shirt said. "Unless yo' mine watching Keys and me practice." He grinned at me. "Keys is he'ping me build up mah TK," he explained.

"That'll make you popular," I sneered, as I wrote down Elmer's phone number. They let me out. It had been a pretty room, and in a way I hated to leave it. Still, by the time a cruising copter had taken me halfway back to my office uptown, I could relax the shield over my thoughts—and that was worth getting out of that Stigma hideaway.

It was a little after nine when I walked into the lobby and rang for the elevator. A man lounging against the wall over near the building directory raised a wrist-phone to his mouth and spoke quietly into it as I waited for the car to come. He didn't seem to be interested in me—but then, he wouldn't want to show it if he were. Fool around with the Stigma, would I?

The building was mostly dark—in our circle we make too much dough to be interested in overtime. I keyed myself into our waiting room, turned on the ceiling, and went into my private office. There was enough light leaking in from our foyer, so I added none.

I found Lindstrom at home—after all, he should have been by nine o'clock. "Maragon!" he said. "Kill your focus! I have guests!"

I reached up to twist the scope so that my image would be a blur on his screen. Nice beginning. I was as welcome as a thriving case of leprosy.

"I want you to make a test for me, Professor," I said. "Tonight."

He shook his head. "I told you I had guests. We're entertaining. No thanks, Maragon."

"A Normal is being crucified," I said quietly. "They've got her pegged as a Psi. I've got to get her off the hook."

"How could this happen?" he demanded.

"She hangs with a bunch of Stigma cases, for one thing," I said.

"Nobody forced her to associate with a gang of Psis," he said. "Serves her right."

"Nobody forced you to, either, Prof," I snarled. "But you have a steady stream of Stigma cases going through your laboratory."

"That's different!" he protested.

"Nuts. Now name a time when I can see you there."

"I don't want any part of it. If you're along, it will just mean trouble, Maragon. You got too much publicity on defending that TK locksmith. I've got a professional standing to maintain."

"You'd sure look silly if all the Psis in town blackballed you," I snarled at him. "Let me pass the word around—and you darned well know I've got the contacts to do it—and you've tested your last Stigma case. Then let's see what kind of a professional standing you've got."

He knew some pretty dirty words. "What time?" I pressed him, knowing the profanity was a concession of defeat.

"Not before eleven," he said glumly. "I won't forget this, Maragon."

"What the hell," I said. "I'm on every S-list in town already. You hardly count beside the other enemies I'm making." I cut the image.

As if at a signal, there was a tapping on the door to the corridor. I got out of my swivel, walked into the waiting room and opened up. The man who stood there was fairly familiar—but it was the gun in his fist that got most of my attention.

"Maragon?" he asked softly.

I spread my feet a little. "I knew I was making enemies pretty fast," I said to him. "But I didn't know how strongly. Listen," I snapped, "I'll bet one thing never occurred to you."

He was taken back. You're not supposed to snarl at a

guy who pokes a gun at you. In theory it gives him the edge of any conversation. "Huh?" he said.

"The only thing that lousy pop-gun of yours is good for is shooting people. I don't think you came here to shoot me. Now what can you do?"

"Clown," he growled. "Where's Renner?"

"In bed, if he has any sense," I decided. "Make up your mind. Whom do you want?"

"For Pete's sake," he said. "Grammar at a time like this!" He looked down at his gun, decided I was right, and stuck it in a shoulder holster. Then his wrist came up in front of his mouth and I recognized him. It was the man who had lounged near the building directory when I had come in. "Come ahead," he said into the mike.

I turned my back on him and stomped into my office. Let them follow me.

But only one man came in, a minute or so later. "Does it have to be so dark?" he asked politely.

"Rheostat's by your elbow," I said. He reached for it and turned on the ceiling, closing the door that cut us off from the waiting room.

"Good evening, Counselor," he said, taking the seat across my desk from me. He looked different without his judicial robes, not quite as much my senior as I had thought. He wasn't any taller than I was, perhaps five feet nine, and thirty pounds lighter. Between us we had about an average forehead—his went up to the top of his head —my hairline starts about where my eyebrows leave off. Robes or no robes, there was something judicial about him, as though he'd been born with a gavel in his hand.

"Good evening, Your Honor," I said to Judge Passarelli. "You have a pretty active pipeline into Stigma circles, don't you?"

It didn't bother him. "As long as judgeships are elective offices, Maragon," he said, "judges will play politics. Fill me in on this Mary Hall thing."

"Without violating professional ethics?" I asked.

"You'll try cases again, in front of judges," he snapped, not very judicial. "Don't get me angry with you, Maragon."

I countered: "The shoe is on the other foot—I'm

darned sore at you." He tried to find his receding hairline with his thin eyebrows. "Don't look so amazed—do you think I haven't figured out my defending that TK Crescas was no accident? You set me up for it."

"Set you up for a resoundingly successful defense," he observed.

"And a resoundingly bad press!" I said. "I have a living to make in this town—"

"Psis are still citizens," he said. "I'm tired of seeing them thrown to the wolves by the jackals who practice law from a phone booth. Psis deserve a decent defense. Without you, Crescas would be in prison."

"And without *you*," I growled at him, "I might still have a law practice!"

"So you're helping them find Mary Hall—to embarrass me?"

"I've already found her," I said. "Feel embarrassed?"

"Not yet," he conceded. "What are you planning to do?"

"We've accepted a fee to turn her over to a client," I revealed. "I guess that's not unethical to tell you."

"And you'll do that?"

"After one more step."

"And that is?"

"Prove that she hasn't got the Stigma."

"*Hasn't* got it!" He hopped out of his chair and pressed his knuckles on my desk.

"You'd better do a little more research, if you're going to let your black heart bleed over these Stigma cases, Judge," I grinned at him. "All this talk about Mary Hall using HC on your vision. That will never embarrass you. There isn't such a thing as HC—hallucination is an old wives' tale. It was sleight of hand, in the bank and in your courtroom. Don't stand still for that noise about HC."

"I'll be switched," he said. "You're serious?"

"Sure."

He frowned at me. "She's still in trouble," he reminded me. "The Federal Grand Jury—"

"Restitution ought to cure that," I said. "Especially if we threaten a lawsuit for slander—I think it's libelous to

claim a Normal has the Stigma. Mutual release all around."

"You'll represent her?" he asked.

"Would you consider it ethical? I don't see how my assignment to turn Mary Hall over to your political opponents will stop me from representing her in a lawsuit, do you?"

He shook his head, straightening up. "I don't see how," he agreed. "I hope you do defend her, Maragon. The Courts have had to be pretty tough on these pathetic people. If they had reputable representatives, I for one would be a lot more ready to suspend sentences and find other ways to help them out of the jams their weird powers get them into."

"I'll think about it," I said. "In the meantime—stay away from me."

"We're both poison right now," he agreed. "And thanks."

Mary Hall was still at T-shirted Elmer's when I dialed his phone, and she agreed to meet me on the street in front of the Moldy Fig. My copter had barely settled to the pavement when she came running from the doorway to the stairs and hopped into the bubble with me.

"Columbia University," I told the hacker. "Rhine Building."

Professor Lindstrom was waiting for us in his laboratory, in carpet slippers and without his tie. "Laboratory" is a perfectly silly term. The "apparatus" in any Psi lab is no more complicated than a folding screen, some playing cards, perhaps a deck of Rhine ESP cards and a slide rule. This place went so far as to sport a laboratory bench and a number of lab stools, on which Lindstrom, Mary Hall, and I perched. My egghead Psi expert was barely able to restrain himself—he had some bitter things to tell me.

I beat him to it. "Take that injured glower off your puss," I snapped. "Your business is testing people for their Psi powers. Why shouldn't I call on you for help? What are friends for?"

"For a friend I might," Lindstrom said. "You don't rate that well with me any more."

"I'll try to bear up under it," I told him. "In the meantime, this is Mary Hall, a reputed Psi. Her power is HC."

He was interested in spite of himself. "Hallucination?" he said. "We don't see much of that, Miss Hall. And you claim you can demonstrate this power under controlled conditions?" These eggheads all talk alike.

Mary shook her head. "No, I certainly do not. I'm as Normal as you are, Professor." He sagged slightly in disappointment.

"Well," Lindstrom said. "This is going to be difficult to prove, Miss Hall. Merely by withholding your HC ability, you can act Normal—but what would that prove?"

She turned to me. "I thought you said you had a way to get me off the hook," she protested. "How are we—?"

"Quiet," I told her. "I didn't come up here for a lecture in logic. Especially from a dumb blonde." She started to bristle, but thought better of it.

"It goes like this, Prof," I said. "This innocent looking piece of fluff was caught slipping a five-dollar bill to a teller at a bank downtown, and asking for change for a hundred-dollar bill. She says it was nothing more than sleight of hand. You are an experienced observer. I want you to watch her work her little trick. If she can fool us, and not use Psi, the legal position is that she didn't need Psi to fool the teller." I turned to her. "And the logical principle, Miss Aristotle," I told her, "is equally simple: Occam's Razor. Prefer the simpler explanation. Can you show us how you palmed the hundred and slipped the teller a five?"

"You'll be watching for it," Mary protested, letting those ripe lips pout.

"I suppose the teller wasn't? It's his business to watch the bills when he's making change." I took out my wallet and handed her a one and a five. "Hand me the one and make me think it's the five," I said.

Lindstrom leaned his elbows on the black composition top of the lab bench, watching her narrowly. Mary got down off her stool and came over closer to me, smoothing the two bills in her fingers. The five was on top.

"I'd like change for a five," she said, handing it to me. She worked it three times while we watched.

"Utterly smooth," Lindstrom said. "I didn't see her make the switch."

"Me, too," I agreed. I could see the tension drain from Mary's face. She was prettier when she wasn't worried. She was pretty all the time, when you got right down to it. No wonder she could fool a teller. He probably hadn't taken his eyes off that dazzling smile.

"Is that all?" Lindstrom asked.

"Would you certify that you saw her make these switches, and that Psi was not involved?" I asked him.

"Of course. I don't want to, but, if you call me as a witness, I'll testify to what I saw," he said glumly.

"It may not be necessary," I said. "I really ought to call you, just to teach you some manners, Prof. But then, we all have a right to be a little yellow."

Mary would have preferred to remain in silence as we rode a cab back to the Moldy Fig, and huddled over in her corner of the bubble. There wasn't enough light, that high over the city, to read her expression.

"Here's the strategy," I said, about midtown. "If we can get the Bank to agree to restitution, and to sign an admission that you did not use HC or any other Psi power to work your theft, I think you'll be off the hook. I doubt the Federal Jury will listen to any information."

"I hope you're right."

"This is my business," I growled. "Do you want me to represent you?"

She didn't answer that until the copter had grounded in front of the Fig. "All right," she said. "I don't know what you're so mad at all the time, but it doesn't seem to be me. I'd like you to represent me."

I watched her scoot across the sidewalk and run up the stairs to Elmer's place. For some screwy reason I hoped she had another place to hole up for the night. I was getting as bad as Renner—looking lecherously at the raffish display of shapely leg as the blond bombshell beat it.

I directed my hacker to my apartment, and grabbed the phone in the bubble. The Mobile Operator got me Vito

Passarelli at his home. He sounded as if he had already retired.

"This is you know who," I said. "It's late, I know, but we'd better talk before morning. My apartment is the safest spot I can think of. I'm in the Directory."

"Now?"

"Now."

I beat His Honor to my apartment by long enough to hang up my jacket, turn the ceiling on to a dim but friendly glow and get out a bottle of Scotch. Judges don't drink bourbon.

I let Passarelli in when the buzzer sounded. "I'm reasonably sure there are no microphones in this place," I said. "This Mary Hall thing is getting hot—we'd better start taking precautions."

"Always," he said, running a hand over his balding head. His eyes saw the bottle and asked me a question. I threw some of the Pinch Bottle over ice and handed it to him, taking mine neat.

"Here's to crime," he said, sipping the liquor. "What happened?"

I poked a finger at my favorite easy chair, which Passarelli took. I stood in front of him, still holding my drink. "I got myself in a jam."

"You're talking to the wrong man," he said coldly. "Get yourself a lawyer—a *good* lawyer."

"You're in it with me, Passarelli."

"Never met you," he said, getting up. "Thanks for the drink." He started for the door.

"That witch has the Stigma after all," I said to his back. That stopped him. He came back and poked his angry face into mine.

"You had her tested?"

"Professor Lindstrom, at Columbia," I told him. "She is slick as a whistle. Lindstrom fell for her yarn that it was sleight of hand—but it was HC. I'd have sworn it didn't exist."

"Well," he said. "Well, well. All right, Maragon. What's the jam you're in?"

"You suggested I should represent her, and I'm going to. But with the Stigma? That's more than I bargained

for. You know no reputable attorney can afford to represent a Psi. Not if he wants any Normal business. Too much feeling."

"Going to duck out on her?"

"Damned if I'll welch!" I said, more hotly than I had meant to. "You sure don't seem very shaken up by the news."

"It's not any news to me," Passarelli said tightly. "You forgot that I've had first-hand experience with that little lady. She gave me the business right in my courtroom. I'm no credulous egghead like Lindstrom. I know the difference between sleight of hand and an hallucination. She made me see just what she wanted me to see."

"Now you know why I think you're in the same jam, Judge," I said. "You'll look great running for office, with your opposition telling the public how a Psi foozled your vision. They'll stomp on the loud pedal about how you let her get away with it and wangle a 'Not Guilty' verdict when she was guilty as sin."

"Yes," he agreed. "It's a hot potato, all right."

"There's just one out," I insisted. "That girl would have made restitution long ago if the Bank would have permitted it. And I've been asking myself how come—why should the Bank get sniffy and not want its money back?" That was the right question. He went back to the easy chair and sat down. His eyes came up to meet mine, and then he held out his glass. I splashed some more Pinch in it.

"Politics, politics," he mourned. "The social workers are after me on this thing. They *want* that girl to be in a jam. They've asked me to work on the Bank, asked that I make sure restitution can't be made. They want the threat of a Federal indictment to hang over her head."

"Why?"

"So she'll agree to my committing her to their care. You know what they try to do—it's the doctrine of sterilization. Remove young Psis from the Psi society—cut them loose from their natural contacts, force them to quit using their powers. It's the same technique they use on narcotic violators, if they aren't too deeply committed to drugs."

"And you are really resisting that?"

"Wouldn't you? Of course I had to tell the Bank to refuse restitution. But do you think Psi is a sickness, like narcotic addiction? Nonsense. Telepathy is no more sickness than the ability to discriminate colors, or hear the tones of a scale. This is equivalent to the color-blind and tone-deaf asking that the rest of us stop perceiving color or hearing the pitch of sound. Ridiculous."

"What is the cure?"

"We could argue all night," he said wearily. Then my buzzer sounded. "Expecting anybody else?" he said, alarmed in an instant.

"I can't think of anybody I'd like to find out that you were here," I said. "Get out of sight." He carried his drink into my bedroom.

Mike Renner was at the door. For a fat-faced bookkeeper with a law degree, he looked pretty grim and formidable.

"You rotten double-crosser," he greeted me. I was the darling of practically everybody in New York that night.

"It happens every time. Now what do you want, Renner?"

"To break your neck," he said. "You have found that Psi, Mary Hall, and you haven't turned her over to Dunn. That's a dirty double—"

"With good reason," I cut in on him. "Do we both have to be idiots? I've just finished having the girl tested. She hasn't got the Stigma, Mike. Dunn will look like a fool trying to pin anything on the Judge."

"That's not our business. Our fee depends on giving her to Dunn!" He shook a fist in my face when he said that. He just doesn't look the part.

"And the reputation of our firm can very well depend on my successfully representing her, and proving that she hasn't got the Stigma."

"You don't honestly mean you're going to represent Psi!"

"I just *told* you she hasn't got the Stigma!"

"You are a rotten liar," Renner said, getting dangerously red in the face. "What kind of games are you playing with Passarelli? What has he got to do with the repu-

tation of our firm? Don't try to lie," he said sharply. "I know he's here. He's been tailed all night."

That was enough for Passarelli. He came out of the bedroom and walked up to Renner. "Forgive me for saying this, Renner," he said. "But I just hope you have a case in my court. I'll find some way to pin one of your slippery tax frauds to you!"

Renner grew pale. He's conditioned to toady to judges. He didn't have the guts to answer Passarelli, and took it out on me, instead. "Our partnership is dissolved, as of right now," he seethed. He dragged some money out of his pocket and threw it on the rug. "There's your share of the rent. I'm throwing your stuff out in the hall in the morning. The auditors will be there at nine o'clock for an accounting. You won't need that address any longer—only reputable people come to our building." He stormed out.

Passarelli and I faced each other in silence. "Jerk!" I raged at him at last. "You couldn't check to see if you were being followed!"

"I regret that," he said. "But you invited me."

"Don't remind me," I snarled. "What now?"

"I don't know about you," Passarelli said. "But I'm going to start looking out for myself. You're too tricky, Maragon."

"And I suppose you think it's time I ditched Mary Hall, eh?"

"What for?" he said mildly. "You're just one more Criminal Court shyster now—Renner gave you the heave-ho. You might as well defend her, even if I can't work with you."

I could feel my belly tighten with rage. "I thought you'd welcome a reputable attorney who would represent Psis," I reminded him.

"Yes, I suppose I would. Very much."

"All of a sudden I'm not reputable?"

"Reputable?" he sneered. "You've been on every side of this thing. Would you like to explain why you told Renner one thing and me another?"

"Same reason you've been going through some contortions yourself—trying to save my profession and occupation."

"Too tricky for me," Passarelli said.

I measured him with my eyes. "That's not the reason you're walking out of here. What's bugging you?"

"Reading my mind?" he said coldly. It wasn't the first time I'd been accused of it. "But you're right. You lied to me."

"To you? Not so."

"Oh, yes. How do you know that Mary Hall used HC on you in Lindstrom's laboratory? Nothing but Psi could detect that. You had a TK there with you. Admit it."

"Never," I said. "How did you spot it in your courtroom? If I needed a TK, so did you. What about that?"

"That was different," he argued. "I had the—"

"Nuts," I told him. "Just because I have made as much of a study of Psi as you have, don't blackball me. You going to act the same way if I decide to specialize in Stigma cases?"

"Are you going to?"

"What else is left? I'll never get Normal trade after Renner finishes with me. I come back to it: A reputable attorney representing Psis."

Passarelli paused with his hand on the door. "It would have some interest, I guess," he conceded, "if I thought for a moment you could guarantee the behavior of your clients. But no Normal can, Maragon. That's the curse of the Logan Stigma. Normals are panicked by it. Look at the Bar Association and all the trouble that's gone to just to make sure no one with the Stigma is ever admitted to the Bar. Look at those pathetic social workers—trying to control what they can't even perceive. The color-blind man trying to make sure no one else sees red. No, only Psis will ever be able to make Psis behave. They will have to police themselves, and society is unwilling to give them any standing to do it. This I believe is called a dilemma."

"It's a mess, that's for sure," I said gloomily as he left.

Well, what do you do when the props have been pulled out from under your world? I like to believe that the reasonable man sits down and thinks. That's what I did, anyway. I was a guy with very little left to lose. It was time I

bet the limit—shot my wad. There was one possibility . . . .

I looked at my watch. It was well after one in the morning. Still, I tried Elmer's place again. He came sleepily to the phone.

"Mary there?"

"Of course not."

"Keys?"

"What if he is?"

"Put him on."

There was a delay, but Keys' romantic good looks replaced Elmer's left-tackle belligerence. "What now?" he asked.

"Do you know where Mary is?" I started.

"Maybe."

"She tell you I'm her attorney?"

"Yes."

"I just found out that she's in twice the trouble I thought before. The kid's a pawn in a fight for power between political oppositions. They'll crucify her gladly, without respect to the merits of the case. Too much is riding on it for justice to wind up triumphant."

"That's what I thought," he said. "She stays under cover."

"Think it over," I suggested. "I'm going to bed, but I'm leaving my door unlocked—at my apartment. Dig her up, if you start making any sense, and both of you beat it over here. Before dawn. Do you hear me?"

"Oh, I hear you," he said sourly. "I just don't know whether to trust you."

"We all have the same trouble," I said, cutting the image.

They showed up about three o'clock. I hadn't been able to go back to sleep—feeling almost sure Keys would bring her there—and had spent the time with the weights. I was back to strength. The surprise was that Elmer came with them. Well, perhaps it was a help.

Nobody wanted a drink. Mary looked around the apartment a little—it is a nice place, restful and homey, if you can ever achieve that in an apartment fifty floors up.

"A Psi decorated this place," she said. Well, she was right, and I admitted it to her with a nod. "What couldn't wait until morning, Maragon?" she asked me.

"First, Mary, I want you to know that while you fooled Lindstrom, you didn't fool me. You have the Stigma. Wait," I said, raising my hand as she started to protest. "Lies won't do any longer. The chips are down. You wouldn't even be here if the Council of the Lodge hadn't decided it was time to protect you."

Keys took it away from her. "Lodge? What Lodge?"

"We'll come to that," I promised. "First, let's cut away the underbrush. Yes or no. Does she have the Stigma?"

He sought out her eyes, and the way they dropped to my rug I knew that the subterfuge was over. "Yes," he said in a strained, thin voice. "Mary has the Stigma."

"And it is HC?"

All three of them nodded, and Mary's head came up with an odd sort of pride. Well, she should have been proud—for all I could find out, she was unique.

"All right," I said. "And now you can get out of my easy chair, Elmer. I'd like to sit there." He was obviously surprised by my bad manners. "Get out!" I growled. "It's time you pups got used to taking orders. You'll get your bellies full of it from now on."

"From you?" Elmer scoffed. "Ah reckon not, suh!" But he got out of the chair, and I sat in it.

"Oh, yes you will," I said. "The Lodge will see to that."

"The Lodge again," Keys protested.

"Never heard of it, did you?" I taunted him. "Proof positive that you're small potatoes in Stigma circles. Well, get set for a shock: I represent an organization of Psis—an organization devoted to protecting Stigma cases from Normal society, an organization devoted to establishing discipline among Psis so that our conflicts with Normals are kept to a reasonable minimum."

"And you call this a Lodge?" Mary Hall said. "What's its full name?"

"No other," I said. "It's . . . well, it's a sort of benevolent and protective order. It's as secret as Psis can make anything—a select group."

"I'll bet," Keys sneered. "No TP's in it," he said, reminding me that telepaths can't close their minds to the peeping of other TP's.

"Unfortunately, none," I agreed. "We are getting ready, however, to extend membership beyond the TK's, CV's and HC's who are now enrolled."

"I don't believe it," Mary said. "There aren't any other hallucinators!"

"None foolish enough to reveal it," I conceded. "You had to louse us up there—I wonder if any other Stigma power is as feared by Normals? Certainly they're making a Roman circus over you."

Elmer stood up. "Ah've had enough," he said.

"One thing," I said to him. "The Lodge has a rule that no Psi may use his powers to the detriment of a Normal, or reveal the existence of the Lodge. Our discipline is formidable, Elmer. Remember what I say."

Keys was frowning in thought. "Wait a minute, Elmer," he said. "Let me try this one on him for size." He turned to me. "Are you trying to tell me that you are a part of this Lodge, Maragon?"

"I'm their counsel," I said.

"A Normal?" he demanded. "It would make sense for Psis to get together—I've often wondered why it has never worked out more formally than it has. But to trust a Normal to represent them? Never!"

I grinned at him. "Know any attorneys with the Stigma?" I demanded. "I know darned well you don't. The Bar Association screens every would-be lawyer from the moment he enters law school. No, sir. The Lodge had no choice. They picked on me as an attorney sympathetic with Stigma Troubles, and trustworthy."

"You make it sound good," Keys admitted. "But then I know you are a liar." He looked over at Mary Hall. "Although you can prove different if you're able."

I raised an eyebrow at him.

"Tell me how you knew Mary hadn't used sleight of hand in Lindstrom's laboratory," he demanded.

There was nothing I could say. I bit down on my teeth. Well, I had decided to shoot the wad if I had to. He'd called my bet.

"I'll tell you, Maragon," he said. "I hate to admit it of a skunk like you, but you've got the Stigma. You kept a TK grip on those bills she shuffled. Her hallucination is too good for you not to think it was sleight of hand."

"No!" Mary shrieked.

"Not him!" Elmer said.

I stood up to face them. "Yes," I said. "I do have the Stigma. The only lie was that I was the Lodge's counsel. I'm not."

"What then?" Keys demanded.

"I'm Grand Master of the Manhattan Chapter," I told him. "And you, like every Psi who is made aware of the existence of the Lodge, are now subject to my orders."

"Not me," Elmer said. "You ain't got the Stigma."

I fired a lift at an ashtray on the table beside him, and it sailed in an arc toward the kitchen and crashed against the wall. My TK was certainly a lot better than it had been in the morning. Well, I'd spent an hour or so warming up before they had come in.

"*Who* hasn't got the Stigma?" I said.

He looked at Keys. "You didn't do that," he said. "You *couldn't!*"

Keys was openmouthed. "What a bruiser!" he marveled.

"So I've got the Stigma, Elmer," I said quietly. "Now why won't you do what I tell you?"

"Ah don't do what *anybody* tells me!"

"What do you hate and fear the most?" I asked him.

"Snakes, ah reckon," he decided.

"Show him a snake, Mary," I said. Her face twisted in indecision. I rammed a lift in under her heart—I know it hurt her. "Show him!" I snapped.

Elmer didn't jump more than three feet. Mary gave all of us the same hallucination. Her first try was a pretty sad kind of a snake, but it was bigger than the nine-by-twelve rug it squirmed on, and was making right for Elmer's legs, hissing in a horrible fashion.

"Enough," I said. "That's how, Elmer. And if that doesn't trouble you, how about this?" I gave him a sample of what TK means when it's clamped on the mitral

valve. A heart attack is no joking matter, and just before he hit the deck I eased off.

"Now," I said, "will you do what I tell you, or do I have to kill you outright?"

He sank down to his knees, resting his palms on the carpet so recently vacant of the illusory snake. "Yo' got me convinced, suh," he admitted. "No mo', you hear?"

"Any more protests?" I said. I got none. "Here's what we have to do," I went on, and spelled it out for them. At last they were ready to go, three shaken young people. "I repeat—absolute secrecy—none of you is a telepath, so only your lips can give you away if you keep your thoughts screened around TP's. Later that may change—the Lodge is preparing to come a little more into the open with Psis."

My whole membership nodded and left me. I was shaking from head to foot.

We had things to do in the forenoon, and I didn't try to see His Honor Judge Vito Passarelli until after lunch. But the docket was crowded, and there was no chance until after court had adjourned, which was well on toward four o'clock. His Honor was hanging his robes on a clothes-tree as I came into his Chambers, and he nodded me politely to a chair, just as if our last words hadn't been pretty hard.

"Mary Hall?" he asked, fumbling around to find his in-Chambers glasses. He's too vain to wear them on the bench.

I nodded an answer to his question as he came back to take a creaky horse-hair swivel, relic of more judges and years than I like to think about. "I'm here as her counsel," I said.

"What else?" he asked mildly, taking the lid off a big humidor on his desk and starting to fill a pipe.

"We'd like you to know that Mary has joined an organization that should do for her all that the social workers would like to see done for her. She's no longer a behavior problem for Normal society."

"Quite some organization," he said, showing interest. "What one?"

"It has no formal name," I said, "being a secret organization. In point of fact, it's an organization of Psis that is revealing itself for the first time."

"Odd that I never heard of it," Passarelli said, looking at his fingernails. He puffed smoke around the stem of his pipe. His coolness bothered me. He should have been much more excited about what I was saying. I threw my high hard one.

"This organization exercises a formidable discipline over its members," I went on. "One of its firm rules is that no Psi may use his powers to the detriment of a Normal."

He chuckled softly. "You're taking advantage of what I told you yesterday, Maragon," he said calmly. "You know, and I know, that Psis have never done any such thing. And if they had, why would they pick you to run their errands? What Psi would ever trust a Normal?"

It was getting sticky. I was skating perilously close to the brink—once I revealed to a Normal that I had the Stigma, my days as an attorney were done. "This organization—I'll call it the Lodge, if I may—has to have an attorney to represent it in Court. And you know as well as I do they can't hire a Psi attorney—the Bar Association has taken care of that. They came to me because . . ."

"Yes, yes," he interrupted, taking his eyes off his nails, and showing some real interest at last. "If you only knew how much I want to believe you, Maragon. But I will *never* believe that Psis would permit themselves to be represented by a Normal. Too bad, but the social workers, and not your mythical Lodge, will get Mary Hall. That or a Federal Grand Jury."

Well, this was the fork in the road. I had been kidding myself, and now I knew it. Persist in my masquerade as a Normal, and I'd never get Mary off the hook. But reveal myself as a Psi, and I was through as an attorney. It really wasn't much of a decision—I had made it when I revealed myself to Keys, Mary, and Elmer.

I looked at the humidor of tobacco on his desk. Without changing expression, I aimed a lift at it. The con-

tainer came up smoothly from the polished walnut and hovered in the air before us.

Passarelli looked at it blandly. I don't think anything in my life has ever been a greater shock than his unconcern. He should have dropped his teeth. Slowly I let the lift break, and lowered the humidor to his desk.

"Fairly good TK, if that's all you're capable of," Passarelli said. "Or can you do better, Maragon?"

"You slimy Normal!" I exploded. "You *tricked* me into exposing myself!"

"What am I, an idiot?" he snapped. "I had to know."

I stood up. "Until now, I never really hated Normals," I began.

"Oh, sit down, for Heaven's sake," he said testily. "Now don't get emotional and lose all your perspective. Doesn't it occur to you that there's been just too much coincidence in this whole thing?"

I fell back into my chair. I think the word for it is "collapsed." "You'll have to spell it out," I said.

Passarelli leaned forward, his face concentrated, almost angry. "You have the Stigma, you admit it?"

"Of course I admit it."

"You think any other attorney is a Psi?"

"No. I certainly do not. It's only a miracle that I ever got through the screening and made it."

"And yet you, the only attorney with the Stigma, gets tapped to be Public Defender for a Stigma case—Keys Crescas. Doesn't this strike you as more than coincidence can account for?"

"Now it does," I admitted. "Are you trying to tell me . . ."

"I'm telling you I've been suspicious of you for a long time, Pete," Passarelli said. "Perhaps you didn't know it, but I was one of the young attorneys on the Committee from the Bar Association that checked your heredity. No, you were born in San Francisco. No, your parents didn't live in the Logan Ring –their home was in Sausalito. But —the day that neutron bomb was accidentally fired and started the rash of Psi mutations in the ring outside the fatal area centering on Logan, your parents were in a jet airliner. I found that out—and kept my mouth shut. I

never told the rest of the Committee that on the nineteenth of April in '75 that jet was over Iowa, en route to San Francisco, and possibly close enough to Logan for its passengers to have been affected by the neutron spray. Even then I knew the law was painting itself into a corner with its attitude toward Psi. I hoped. I hoped you *did* have the Stigma, and I've waited my time to force you into the open."

"Stinking Normal!"

"Stop acting like a child. I said I *hoped!*"

"Hoped?"

"Yes. I meant what I said about wishing there were a responsible organization of Psis we could turn to. Are you serious about this organization, this Lodge?"

"I guess I am," I said, shaken.

"How many members does it have?"

"It's a secret organization," I protested.

"How many members?"

"Four, including me."

He shrugged. "You start somewhere. Mostly with a man you can trust, and I trust you, Maragon. You can keep this girl in line?"

"Our discipline is formidable," I reminded him, trying a grin. It was pretty sick.

"I'll bet," he grinned back. "Well, it had better be, for I'm going to take a chance on you. Sooner or later the law will have to admit the existence of Psi. I know as well as you Stigma cases that this gene is dommant—that there'll be more Psis every generation. We've got to find some common ground between the two societies—some way to get along. Give me your personal surety in this Mary Hall thing. As an attorney, you're an officer of the Court, and I guess I have the right to make her your responsibility. I certainly don't want it getting out that I'm playing footsie with an organization of Psis—this is an elective office, after all."

"After all," I agreed. "But I am glad to hear you sounding like a politician again."

"We'll have to keep our dealings off the record," Passarelli insisted. "But if I thought I could call on you when

we get one of these sticky Psi cases before the Courts . . ."

You'd recruit for the Lodge, I thought to myself. "You've got yourself a deal, Your Honor!" I said fervently.

"Call it a *modus vivendi,*" he smiled. "Now my big problem is to find a way to eat my words, and let the Ninety-ninth National Bank accept restitution of what Mary Hall stole from them."

"No sweat," I grinned, beginning to feel better. "It's already been done."

"Done? How could it be? I told the bank not to . . ."

"You told them," I conceded. "But they had no choice, Your Honor. Mary Hall went to the Ninety-ninth National Bank this morning and asked for change of a five-dollar bill."

"What?"

"And passed to the teller a hundred-dollar bill. After all HC works both ways. They've got their money back. By noon they had half a dozen IBM technicians in there trying to figure why they were out of balance!"

This story by that indefatigable and super-exuberant writer, Isaac Asimov (author of more than 100 books and innumerable stories and articles) was published in 1953. It illustrates the kind of anguish one may experience upon finding that he has suddenly acquired a new and inexplicable ability—and upon finding that distinguished scientists can possess a stubborn closed-mindedness more commonly associated with the less learned.

One wonders, at this later date, and after books by Rhine, Puharich, and many others, if this closed-mindedness may have lessened.

BELIEF

by Isaac Asimov

"DID YOU EVER DREAM YOU WERE FLYING?" asked Dr. Roger Toomey of his wife.

Jane Toomey looked up. "Certainly!"

Her quick fingers didn't stop their nimble manipulations of the yarn out of which an intricate and quite useless doily was being created. The television set made a muted mur-

mur in the room and the posturings on its screen were, out of long custom, disregarded.

Roger said, "Everyone dreams of flying at some time or other. It's universal. I've done it many times. That's what worries me."

Jane said, "I don't know what you're getting at, dear. I hate to say so." She counted stitches in an undertone.

"When you think about it, it makes you wonder. It's not really flying that you dream of. You have no wings; at least I never had any. There's no effort involved. You're just floating. That's it. Floating."

"When I fly," said Jane, "I don't remember any of the details. Except once I landed on top of City Hall and hadn't any clothes on. Somehow no one ever seems to pay any attention to you when you're dream-nude. Ever notice that? You're dying of embarrassment but people just pass by."

She pulled at the yarn and the ball tumbled out of the bag and half across the floor. She paid no attention.

Roger shook his head slowly. At the moment, his face was pale and absorbed in doubt. It seemed all angles with its high cheekbones, its long straight nose, and the widow's-peak hairline that was growing more pronounced with the years. He was thirty-five.

He said, "Have you ever wondered what makes you dream you're floating?"

"No, I haven't."

Jane Toomey was blond and small. Her prettiness was the fragile kind that does not impose itself upon you but rather creeps on you unaware. She had the bright blue eyes and pink cheeks of a porcelain doll. She was thirty.

Roger said, "Many dreams are only the mind's interpretation of a stimulus imperfectly understood. The stimuli are forced into a reasonable context in a split second."

Jane said, "What are you talking about, darling?"

Roger said, "Look, I once dreamed I was in a hotel, attending a Physics convention. I was with old friends. Everything seemed quite normal. Suddenly, there was a confusion of shouting and for no reason at all I grew panicky. I ran to the door but it wouldn't open. One by one, my friends disappeared. They had no trouble leaving the room,

but I couldn't see how they managed it. I shouted at them and they ignored me.

"It was borne in upon me that the hotel was on fire. I didn't smell smoke. I just knew there was a fire. I ran to the window and I could see a fire escape on the outside of the building. I ran to each window in turn but none led to the fire escape. I was quite alone in the room now. I leaned out the window, calling desperately. No one heard me.

"Then the fire engines were coming, little red smears darting along the streets. I remember that clearly. The alarm bells clanged sharply to clear traffic. I could hear them, louder and louder till the sound was splitting my skull. I awoke and, of course, the alarm clock was ringing.

"Now I can't have dreamed a long dream designed to arrive at the moment of the alarm-clock ring in a way that builds the alarm neatly into the fabric of the dream. It's much more reasonable to suppose that the dream began at the moment the alarm began and crammed all its sensation of duration into one split second. It was just a hurry-up device of my brain to explain this sudden noise that penetrated the silence."

Jane was frowning now. She put down her crocheting. "Roger! you've been behaving queerly since you got back from the College. You didn't eat much and now this ridiculous conversation. I've never heard you so morbid. What you need is a dose of bicarbonate."

"I need a little more than that," said Roger in a low voice. "Now what starts a floating dream?"

"If you don't mind, let's change the subject."

She rose, and with firm fingers turned up the sound on the television set. A young gentleman with hollow cheeks and a soulful tenor suddenly raised his voice and assured her, dulcetly, of his never-ending love.

Roger turned it down again and stood with his back to the instrument.

"Levitation!" he said. "That's it. There is some way in which human beings can make themselves float. They have the capacity for it. It's just that they don't know how to use that capacity—except when they sleep. Then, sometimes, they lift up just a little bit, a tenth of an inch maybe. It wouldn't be enough for anyone to notice even if they

were watching, but it would be enough to deliver the proper sensation for the start of a floating-dream."

"Roger, you're delirious. I wish you'd stop. Honestly."

He drove on. "Sometimes we sink down slowly and the sensation is gone. Then again, sometimes the float-control ends suddenly and we drop. Jane, did you ever dream you were falling?"

"Yes, of c—"

"You're hanging on the side of a building or you're sitting at the edge of a seat and suddenly you're tumbling. There's the awful shock of falling and you snap awake, your breath gasping, your heart palpitating. You *did* fall. There's no other explanation."

Jane's expression, having passed slowly from bewilderment to concern, dissolved suddenly into sheepish amusement.

"Roger, you *devil*. And you fooled me! Oh, you rat!"

"What?"

"Oh, no. You can't play it out anymore. I know exactly what you're doing. You're making up a plot to a story and you're trying it out on me. I should know better than to listen to you."

Roger looked startled, even a little confused. He strode to her chair and looked down at her, "No, Jane."

"I don't see why not. You've been talking about writing fiction as long as I've known you. If you've got a plot, you might as well write it down. No use just frightening me with it." Her fingers flew as her spirts rose.

"Jane, this is no story."

"But what else—"

"When I woke up this morning, *I dropped to the mattress!*"

He stared at her without blinking. "I dreamed I was flying," he said. "It was clear and distinct. I remember every minute of it. I was lying on my back when I woke up. I was feeling comfortable and quite happy. I just wondered a little why the ceiling looked so queer. I yawned and stretched and *touched* the ceiling. For a minute, I just stared at my arm reaching upward and ending hard against the ceiling.

"Then I turned over. I didn't move a muscle, Jane. I

just turned all in one piece because I wanted to. There I was, five feet above the bed. There you were in the bed, sleeping. I was frightened. I didn't know how to get down, but the minute I thought of getting down, I dropped. I dropped slowly. The whole process was under perfect control.

"I stayed in bed fifteen minutes before I dared move. Then I got up, washed, dressed, and went to work."

Jane forced a laugh, "Darling, you had *better* write it up. But that's all right. You've just been working too hard."

"Please! Don't be banal."

"People work too hard, even though to say so is banal. After all, your were just dreaming fifteen minutes longer than you thought you were."

"It wasn't a dream."

"Of course it was. I can't even count the times I've dreamed I awoke and dressed and made breakfast; then really woke up and found it was all to do over again. I've even dreamed I was dreaming, if you see what I mean. It can be awfully confusing."

"Look, Jane. I've come to you with a problem because you're the only one I feel I can come to. Please take me seriously."

Jane's blue eyes opened wide. "Darling! I'm taking you as seriously as I can. You're the physics professor, not I. Gravitation is what you know about, not I. Would *you* take it seriously if I told you *I* had found myself floating?"

"No. *No!* That's the hell of it. I don't want to believe it, only I've got to. It was no dream, Jane. I tried to tell myself it was. You have no idea how I talked myself into that. By the time I got to class, I was sure it was a dream. You didn't notice anything queer about me at breakfast, did you?"

"Yes, I did, now that I think about it."

"Well, it wasn't very queer or you would have mentioned it. Anyway, I gave my nine o'clock lecture perfectly. By eleven, I had forgotten the whole incident. Then, just after lunch, I needed a book. I needed Page and —Well, the book doesn't matter; I just needed it. It was on an upper shelf, but I could reach it. Jane—"

He stopped.

"Well, go on, Roger."

"Look, did you ever try to pick up something that's just a step away? You bend and automatically take a step toward it as you reach. It's completely involuntary. It's just your body's overall co-ordination."

"All right. What of it?"

"I reached for the book and automatically took a step upward. On air, Jane! On empty air!"

"I'm going to call Jim Sarle, Roger."

"I'm not sick, damn it."

"I think he ought to talk to you. He's a friend. It won't be a doctor's visit. He'll just talk to you."

"And what good will that do?" Roger's face turned red with sudden anger.

"We'll see. Now sit down, Roger. Please." She walked to the phone.

He cut her off, seizing her wrist. "You don't believe me."

"Oh, Roger."

"You don't."

"I believe you. Of course, I believe you. I just want—"

"Yes. You just want Jim Sarle to talk to me. That's how much you believe me. I'm telling the truth but you want me to talk to a psychiatrist. Look, you don't have to take my word for anything. I can prove this. I can prove I can float."

"I *believe* you."

"Don't be a fool. I know when I'm being humored. Stand still! Now watch me."

He backed away to the middle of the room and without preliminary lifted off the floor. He *dangled;* with the toes of his shoes six empty inches from the carpet.

Jane's eyes and mouth were three round O's. She whispered, "Come down, Roger. Oh, dear heaven, come down."

He drifted down, his feet touching the floor without a sound. "You see?"

"Oh, my. Oh, my."

She stared at him, half frightened, half sick.

On the television set, a chesty female sang mutedly that

flying high with some guy in the sky was her idea of nothing at all.

Roger Toomey stared into the bedroom's darkness. He whispered, "Jane."

"What?"

"You're not sleeping?"

"No."

"I can't sleep, either. I keep holding the headboard to make sure I'm . . . you know."

His hand moved restlessly and touched her face. She flinched, jerking away as though he carried an electric charge.

She said, "I'm sorry. I'm a little nervous."

"That's all right. I'm getting out of bed anyway."

"What are you going to do? You've got to sleep."

"Well, I can't, so there's no sense keeping you awake, too."

"Maybe nothing will happen. It doesn't have to happen every night. It didn't happen before last night."

"How do I know? Maybe I just never went up so high. Maybe I just never woke up and caught myself. Anyway, now it's different."

He was sitting up in bed, his legs bent, his arms clasping his knees, his forehead resting on them. He pushed the sheet to one side and rubbed his cheek against the soft flannel of his pajamas.

He said, "It's bound to be different now. My mind's full of it. Once I'm asleep, once I'm not holding myself down consciously, why, up I'll go."

"I don't see why. It must be such an effort."

"That's the point. It isn't."

"But you're fighting gravity, aren't you?"

"I know, but there's still no effort. Look, Jane, if I only *could* understand it, I wouldn't mind so much."

He dangled his feet out of bed and stood up. "I don't want to talk about it."

His wife muttered, "I don't want to, either." She started crying, fighting back the sobs and turning them into strangled moans, which sounded much worse.

Roger said, "I'm sorry, Jane. I'm getting you all wrought-up."

"No, don't touch me. Just . . . just leave me alone."

He took a few uncertain steps away from the bed.

She said, "Where are you going?"

"To the studio couch. Will you help me?"

"How?"

"I want you to tie me down."

"Tie you down?"

"With a couple of ropes. Just loosely, so I can turn if I want to. Do you mind?"

Her bare feet were already seeking her mules on the floor at her side of the bed. "All right," she sighed.

Roger Toomey sat in the small cubbyhole that passed for his office and stared at the pile of examination papers before him. At the moment, he didn't see how he was going to mark them.

He had given five lectures on electricity and magnetism since the first night he had floated. He had gotten through them somehow, though not swimmingly. The students asked ridiculous questions so probably he wasn't making himself as clear as he once did.

Today he had saved himself a lecture by giving a surprise examination. He didn't bother making one up; just handed out copies of one given several years earlier.

Now he had the answer papers and would have to mark them. Why? Did it matter what they said? Or anyone? Was it so important to know the laws of physcis? If it came to that, what were the laws? Were there any, really?

Or was it all just a mass of confusion out of which nothing orderly could ever be extracted? Was the universe, for all its appearance, merely the original chaos, still waiting for the Spirit to move upon the face of its deep?

Insomnia wasn't helping him, either. Even strapped in upon the couch, he slept only fitfully, and then always with dreams.

There was a knock at the door.

Roger cried angrily, "Who's there?"

A pause, and then the uncertain answer. "It's Miss Harroway, Dr. Toomey. I have the letters you dictated."

"Well, come in, come in. Don't just stand there."

The department secretary opened the door a minimum distance and squeezed her lean and unprepossessing body into his office. She had a sheaf of papers in her hand. To each was clipped a yellow carbon and a stamped, addressed envelope.

Roger was anxious to get rid of her. That was his mistake. He stretched forward to reach the letters as she approached and felt himself leave the chair.

He moved two feet foward, still in sitting position, before he could bring himself down hard, losing his balance and tumbling in the process. It was too late.

It was entirely too late. Miss Harroway dropped the letters in a fluttering handful. She screamed and turned, hitting the door with her shoulder, caroming out into the hall and dashing down the corridor in a clatter of high heels.

Roger rose, rubbing an aching hip. "Damn," he said forcefully.

But he couldn't help seeing her point. He pictured the sight as she must have seen it; a full-grown man, lifting smoothly out of his chair and gliding toward her in a maintained squat.

He picked up the letters and closed his office door. It was quite late in the day; the corridors would be empty; she would probably be quite incoherent. Still— He waited anxiously for the crowd to gather.

Nothing happened. Perhaps she was lying somewhere in a dead faint. Roger felt it a point of honor to seek her out and do what he could for her, but he told his conscience to go to the devil. Until he found out exactly what was wrong with him, exactly what this wild nightmare of his was all about, he must do nothing to reveal it.

Nothing, that is, more than he had done already.

He leafed through the letters; one to every major theoretical physicist in the country. Home talent was insufficient for this sort of thing.

He wondered if Miss Harroway grasped the contents of the letters. He hoped not. He had couched them deliberately in technical language; more so, perhaps, than was quite necessary. Partly, that was to be discreet; partly, to

impress the addressees with the fact that he, Toomey, was a legitimate and capable scientist.

One by one, he put the letters in the appropriate envelopes. The best brains in the country, he thought. Could they help?

He didn't know.

The library was quiet. Roger Toomey closed the *Journal of Theoretical Physics,* placed it on end and stared at its backstrap somberly. The *Journal of Theoretical Physics!* What did any of the contributors to that learned bit of balderdash understand anyway? The thought tore at him. Until so recently they had been the greatest men in the world to him.

And still he was doing his best to live up to their code and philosophy. With Jane's increasingly reluctant help, he had made measurements. He had tried to weigh the phenomenon in the balance, extract its relationships, evaluate its quantities. He had tried, in short, to defeat it in the only way he knew how—by making of it just another expression of the eternal modes of behavior that all the Universe must follow.

(*Must* follow. The best minds said so.)

Only there was nothing to measure. There was absolutely no sensation of effort to his levitation. Indoors—he dared not test himself outdoors, of course—he could reach the ceiling as easily as he could rise an inch, except that it took more time. Given enough time, he felt, he could continue rising indefinitely; go to the Moon, if necessary.

He could carry weights while levitating. The process became slower, but there was no increase in effort.

The day before he had come on Jane without warning, a stopwatch in one hand.

"How much do you weigh?" he asked.

"One hundred ten," she replied. She gazed at him uncertainly.

He seized her waist with one arm. She tried to push him away but he paid no attention. Together, they moved upward at a creeping pace. She clung to him, white and rigid with terror.

"Tweny-two minutes thirteen seconds," he said, when his head nudged the ceiling.

When they came down again, Jane tore away and hurried out of the room.

Some days before he had passed a drugstore scale, standing shabbily on a street corner. The street was empty, so he stepped on and put in his penny. Even though he suspected something of the sort, it was a shock to find himself weighing thirty pounds.

He began carrying handfuls of pennies and weighing himself under all conditions. He was heavier on days on which there was a brisk wind, as though he required weight to keep from blowing away.

Adjustment was automatic. Whatever it was that levitated him maintained a balance between comfort and safety. But he could enforce conscious control upon his levitation just as he could upon his respiration. He could stand on a scale and force the pointer up to almost his full weight and down, of course, to nothing.

He bought a scale two days before and tried to measure the rate at which he could change weight. That didn't help. The rate, whatever it was, was faster than the pointer could swing. All he did was collect data on moduli of compressibility and moments of inertia.

Well—What did it all amount to anyway?

He stood up and trudged out of the library, shoulders drooping. He touched tables and chairs as he walked to the side of the room and then kept his hand unobtrusively on the wall. He had to do that, he felt. Contact with matter kept him continually informed as to his status with respect to the ground. If his hand lost touch with a table or slid upward against the wall—that was it.

The corridor had the usual sprinkling of students. He ignored them. In these last days, they had gradually learned to stop greeting him. Roger imagined that some had come to think of him as queer and most were probably growing to dislike him.

He passed by the elevator. He never took it any more; going down, particularly. When the elevator made its initial drop, he found it impossible not to lift into the air for

just a moment. No matter how he lay in wait for the moment, he hopped and people would turn to look at him.

He reached for the railing at the head of the stairs and just before his hand touched it, one of his feet kicked the other. It was the most ungainly stumble that could be imagined. Three weeks earlier, Roger would have sprawled down the stairs.

This time his autonomic system took over and, leaning forward, spread-eagled, fingers wide, legs half-buckled, he sailed down the flight gliderlike. He might have been on wires.

He was too dazed to right himself, too paralyzed with horror to do anything. Within two feet of the window at the bottom of the flight, he came to an automatic halt and hovered.

There were two students on the flight he had come down, both now pressed against the wall, three more at the head of the stairs, two on the flight below, and one on the landing with him, so close they could almost touch one another.

It was very silent. They all looked at him.

Roger straightened himself, dropped to the ground and ran down the stairs, pushing one student roughly out of his way.

Conversation swirled up into exclamation behind him.

"Dr. Morton wants to see me?" Roger turned in his chair, holding one of its arms firmly.

The new department secretary nodded. "Yes, Dr. Toomey."

She left quickly. In the short time since Miss Harroway had resigned, she had learned that Dr. Toomey had something "wrong" with him. The students avoided him. In his lecture room today, the back seats had been full of whispering students. The front seats had been empty.

Roger looked into the small wall mirror near the door. He adjusted his jacket and brushed some lint off but that operation did little to improve his appearance. His complexion had grown sallow. He had lost at least ten pounds since all this had started, though, of course, he had no way of really knowing his exact weight-loss. He was generally

unhealthy-looking, as though his digestion perpetually disagreed with him and won every argument.

He had no apprehensions about this interview with the chairman of the department. He had reached a pronounced cynicism concerning the levitation incidents. Apparently, witnesses didn't talk. Miss Harroway hadn't. There was no sign that the students on the staircase had.

With a last touch at his tie, he left his office.

Dr. Philip Morton's office was not too far down the hall, which was a gratifying fact to Roger. More and more, he was cultivating the habit of walking with systematic slowness. He picked up one foot and put it before him, watching. Then he picked up the other and put it before him, still watching. He moved along in a confirmed stoop, gazing at his feet.

Dr. Morton frowned as Roger walked in. He had little eyes, wore a poorly-trimmed grizzled mustache and an untidy suit. He had a moderate reputation in the scientific world and a decided penchant for leaving teaching duties to the members of his staff.

He said, "Say, Toomey, I got the strangest letter from Linus Deering. Did you write to him on"—he consulted a paper on his desk—"the twenty-second of last month? Is this your signature?"

Roger looked and nodded. Anxiously, he tried to read Deering's letter upside down. This was unexpected. Of the letters he had sent out the day of the Miss Harroway incident, only four had so far been answered.

Three of them had consisted of cold one-paragraph replies that read, more or less: "This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 22nd. I do not believe I can help you in the matter you discuss." A fourth, from Ballantine of Northwestern Tech, had bumblingly suggested an institute for psychic research. Roger couldn't tell whether he was trying to be helpful or insulting.

Deering of Princeton made five. He had had high hopes of Deering.

Dr. Morton cleared his throat loudly and adjusted a pair of glasses. "I want to read you what he says. Sit down, Toomey, sit down. He says: 'Dear Phil—' "

Dr. Morton looked up briefly with a slightly fatuous

smile. "Linus and I met at Federation meetings last year. We had a few drinks together. Very nice fellow."

He adjusted his glasses again and returned to the letter: " 'Dear Phil: Is there a Dr. Roger Toomey in your department? I received a very queer letter from him the other day. I didn't quite know what to make of it. At first, I thought I'd just let it go as another crank letter. Then I thought that since the letter carried your department heading, you ought to know of it. It's just possible someone may be using your staff as part of a confidence game. I'm enclosing Dr. Toomey's letter for your inspection. I hope to be visiting your part of the country—'

"Well, the rest of it is personal." Dr. Morton folded the letter, took off his glasses, put them in a leather container and put that in his breast pocket. He twined his fingers together and leaned forward.

"Now," he said, "I don't have to read you your own letter. Was it a joke? A hoax?"

"Dr. Morton," said Roger, heavily, "I was serious. I don't see anything wrong with my letter. I sent it to quite a few physicists. It speaks for itself. I've made observations on a case of . . . of levitation and I wanted information about possible theoretical explanations for such a phenomenon."

"Levitation! Really!"

"It's a legitimate case, Dr. Morton."

"You've observed it yourself?"

"Of course."

"No hidden wires? No mirrors? Look here, Toomey, you're no expert on these frauds."

"This was a thoroughly scientific series of observations. There is no possibility of fraud."

"You might have consulted me, Toomey, before sending out these letters."

"Perhaps I should have, Dr. Morton, but, frankly, I thought you might be—unsympathetic."

"Well, thank you. I should hope so. And on department stationery. I'm really surprised, Toomey. Look here, Toomey, your life is your own. If you wish to believe in levitation, go ahead, but strictly on your own time. For the sake of the department and the College, it should be ob-

vious that this sort of thing should not be injected into your scholastic affairs.

"In point of fact, you've lost some weight recently, haven't you, Toomey? Yes, you don't look well at all. I'd see a doctor, if I were you. A nerve specialist, perhaps."

Roger said, bitterly, "A psychiatrist might be better, you think?"

"Well, that's entirely your business. In any case, a little rest—"

The telephone had rung and the secretary had taken the call. She caught Dr. Morton's eye and he picked up his extension.

He said, "Hello. . . . Oh, Dr. Smithers, yes. . . . Umm-m. . . . Yes. . . . Concerning whom? . . . Well, in point of fact, he's with me right now. . . . Yes. . . . Yes, immediately."

He cradled the phone and looked at Roger thoughtfully. "The dean wants to see both of us."

"What about, sir?"

"He didn't say." He got up and stepped to the door. "Are you coming, Toomey?"

"Yes, sir." Roger rose slowly to his feet, cramming the toe of one foot carefully under Dr. Morton's desk as he did so.

Dean Smithers was a lean man with a long, ascetic face. He had a mouthful of false teeth that fitted just badly enough to give his sibilants a peculiar half-whistle.

"Close the door, Miss Bryce," he said, "and I'll take no phone calls for a while. Sit down, gentlemen."

He stared at them portentously and added, "I think I had better get right to the point. I don't know exactly what Dr. Toomey is doing, but he must stop."

Dr. Morton turned upon Roger in amazement. "What have you been doing?"

Roger shrugged dispiritedly. "Nothing that I can help." He had underestimated student tongue-wagging after all.

"Oh, come, come." The dean registered impatience. "I'm sure I don't know how much of the story to discount, but it seems you must have been engaging in parlor tricks;

silly parlor tricks quite unsuited to the spirit and dignity of this institution."

Dr. Morton said, "This is all beyond me."

The dean frowned. "It seems you haven't heard, then. It is amazing to me how the faculty can remain in complete ignorance of matters that fairly saturate the student body. I had never realized it before. I myself heard it by accident; by a very fortunate accident, in fact, since I was able to intercept a newspaper reporter who arrived this morning looking for someone he called 'Dr. Toomey, the flying professor.' "

"What?" cried Dr. Morton.

Roger listened haggardly.

"That's what the reporter said. I quote him. It seems one of our students had called the paper. I ordered the newspaperman out and had the student sent to my office. According to him, Dr. Toomey flew—I use the word, 'flew,' because that's what the student insisted on calling it—down a flight of stairs and then back up again. He claimed there were a dozen witnesses."

"I went down the stairs only," muttered Roger.

Dean Smithers was tramping up and down along his carpet now. He had worked himself up into a feverish eloquence. "Now mind you, Toomey, I have nothing against amateur theatricals. In my stay in office I have consistently fought against stuffiness and false dignity. I have encouraged friendliness between ranks in the faculty and have not even objected to reasonable fraternization with students. So I have no objection to your putting on a show for the students *in your own home.*

"Surely you see what could happen to the College once an irresponsible press is done with us. Shall we have a flying professor craze succeed the flying saucer craze? If the reporters get in touch with you, Dr. Toomey, I will expect you to deny all such reports categorically."

"I understand, Dean Smithers."

"I trust that we shall escape this incident without lasting damage. I must ask you, with all the firmness at my command, never to repeat your . . . uh . . . performance. If you ever do, your resignation will be requested. Do you understand, Dr. Toomey?"

"Yes," said Roger.

"In that case, good day, gentlemen."

Dr. Morton steered Roger back into his office. This time, he shooed his secretary and closed the door behind her carefully.

"Good heavens, Toomey," he whispered, "has this madness any connection with your letter on levitation?"

Roger's nerves were beginning to twang. "Isn't it obvious? I was referring to myself in those letters."

"You can fly? I mean, levitate?"

"Either word you choose."

"I never heard of such—Damn it, Toomey, did Miss Harroway ever see you levitate?"

"Once. It was an acci—"

"Of course. It's obvious now. She was so hysterical it was hard to make out. She said you had jumped at her. It sounded as though she were accusing you of . . . of—" Dr. Morton looked embarrassed. "Well, I didn't believe that. She was a good secretary, you understand, but obviously not one designed to attract the attention of a young man. I was actually relieved when she left. I thought she would be carrying a small revolver next, or accusing *me*—You . . . you levitated, eh?"

"Yes."

"How do you do it?"

Roger shook his head. "That's my problem. I don't know."

Dr. Morton allowed himself a smile. "Surely, you don't repeal the law of gravity?"

"You know, I think I do. There must be antigravity involved somehow."

Dr. Morton's indignation at having a joke taken seriously was marked. He said, "Look here, Toomey, this is nothing to laught at."

"*Laugh* at. Great Scott, Dr. Morton, do I look as though I were laughing?"

"Well—you need a rest. No question about it. A little rest and this nonsense of yours will pass. I'm sure of it."

"It's not nonsense." Roger bowed his head a moment, then said, in a quieter tone, "I tell you what, Dr. Morton, would you like to go into this with me? In some way this

will open new horizons in physical science. I don't know how it works; I just can't conceive of any solution. The two of us together—"

Dr. Morton's look of horror penetrated by that time.

Roger said, "I know it all sounds queer. But I'll demonstrate for you. It's perfectly legitimate. I wish it weren't."

"Now, now," Dr. Motron sprang from his seat. "Don't exert yourself. You need a rest badly. I don't think you should wait till June. You go home right now. I'll see that your salary comes through and I'll look after your course. I used to give it myself once, you know."

"Dr. Morton. This is important."

"I know. I know." Dr. Morton clapped Roger on the shoulder. "Still, my boy, you look under the weather. Speaking frankly, you look like hell. You need a long rest."

"I *can* levitate." Roger's voice was climbing again. "You're just trying to get rid of me because you don't believe me. Do you think I'm lying? What would be my motive?"

"You're exciting yourself needlessly, my boy. You let me make a phone call. I'll have someone take you home."

"I tell you I *can* levitate," shouted Roger.

Dr. Morton turned red. "Look, Toomey, let's not discuss it. I don't care if you fly up in the air right this minute."

"You mean seeing isn't believing as far as you're concerned?"

"Levitation? Of course not." The department chairman was bellowing. "If I saw you fly, I'd see an optometrist or a psychiatrist. I'd sooner believe myself insane than that the laws of physics—"

He caught himself, harrumphed loudly. "Well, as I said, let's not discuss it. I'll just make this phone call."

"No need, sir. No need," said Roger. "I'll go. I'll take my rest. Good-by."

He walked out rapidly, moving more quickly than at any time in days. Dr. Morton, on his feet, hands flat on his desk, looked at his departing back with relief.

James Sarle, M.D., was in the living room when Roger arrived home. He was lighting his pipe as Roger stepped

through the door, one large-knuckled hand enclosing the bowl. He shook out the match and his ruddy face crinkled into a smile.

"Hello, Roger. Resigning from the human race? Haven't heard from you in over a month."

His black eyebrows met above the bridge of his nose, giving him a rather forbidding appearance that somehow helped him establish the proper atmosphere with his patients.

Roger turned to Jane, who sat buried in an armchair. As usual lately, she had a look of wan exhaustion on her face.

Roger said to her, "Why did you bring him here?"

"Hold it! Hold it, man," said Sarle. "Nobody brought me. I met Jane downtown this morning and invited myself here. I'm bigger than she is. She couldn't keep me out."

"Met her by coincidence, I suppose? Do you make appointments for all your concidences?"

Sarle laughed, "Let's put it this way. She told me a little about what's been going on."

June said wearily, "I'm sorry if you disapprove, Roger, but it was the first chance I had to talk to someone who would understand."

"What makes you think he understands? Tell me, Jim, do you believe her story?"

Sarle said, "It's not an easy thing to believe. You'll admit that. But I'm trying."

"All right, suppose I flew. Suppose I levitated right now. What would you do?"

"Faint, maybe. Maybe I'd say, 'Holy Pete.' Maybe I'd bust out laughing. Why don't you try, and then we'll see?"

Roger stared at him. "You really want to see it?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"The ones that have seen it screamed or ran or froze with horror. Can you take it, Jim?"

"I think so."

"O.K." Roger slipped two feet upward and executed a slow tenfold *entrechat*. He remained in the air, toes

pointed downward, legs together, arms gracefully outstretched in bitter parody.

"Better than Nijinski, eh, Jim?"

Sarle did none of the things he suggested he might do. Except for catching his pipe as it dropped, he did nothing at all.

Jane had closed her eyes. Tears squeezed quietly through the lids.

Sarle said, "Come down, Roger."

Roger did so. He took a seat and said, "I wrote to physicists, men of reputation. I explained the situation in an impersonal way. I said I thought it ought to be investigated. Most of them ignored me. One of them wrote to old man Morton to ask if I were crooked or crazy."

"Oh, Roger," whispered Jane.

"You think that's bad? The dean called me into his office today. I'm to stop my parlor tricks, he says. It seems I had stumbled down the stairs and automatically levitated myself to safety. Morton says he wouldn't believe I could fly if he saw me in action. Seeing isn't believing in this case, he says, and orders me to take a rest. I'm not going back."

"Roger," said Jane, her eyes opening wide. "Are you serious?"

"I can't go back. I'm sick of them. Scientists."

"But what will you do?"

"I don't know." Roger buried his head in his hands. He said in a muffled voice, "You tell me, Jim. You're the psychiatrist. Why won't they believe me?"

"Perhaps it's a matter of self-protection, Roger," said Sarle, slowly. "People aren't happy with anything they can't understand. Even some centuries ago when many people *did* believe in the existence of extranatural abilities, like flying on broomsticks, for instance, it was almost always assumed that these powers originated with the forces of evil.

"People still think so. They may not believe literally in the devil, but they do think that what is strange is evil. They'll fight against believing in levitation or be scared to death if the fact is forced down their throats. That's true, so let's face it."

Roger shook his head. "You're talking about people, and I'm talking about scientists."

"Scientists are people."

"You know what I mean. I have here a phenomenon. It isn't witchcraft. I haven't dealt with the devil. Jim, there must be a natural explanation. We don't know all there is to know about gravitation. We know hardly anything, really. Don't you suppose it's just barely conceivable that there is some biological method of nullifying gravity. Perhaps I am a mutation of some sort. I have a . . . well, call it a muscle . . . which can abolish gravity. At least it can abolish the effect of gravity on myself. Well, let's investigate it. Why sit on our hands? If we have antigravity, imagine what it will mean to the human race."

"Hold it, Rog," said Sarle. "Think about the matter a while. Why are *you* so unhappy about it? According to Jane, you were almost mad with fear the first day it happened, *before* you had any way of knowing that science was going to ignore you and that your superiors would be unsympathetic."

"That's right," murmured Jane.

Sarle said, "Now why should that be? Here you had a great, new, wonderful power; a sudden freedom from the deadly pull of gravity."

Roger said, "Oh, don't be a fool. It was—horrible. I couldn't understand it. I still can't."

"Exactly, my boy. It was something you couldn't understand and *therefore* something horrible. You're a physical scientist. You *know* what makes the universe run. Or if you don't know, you know someone else knows. Even if no one understands a certain point, you know that someday someone will know. The key word is *know*. It's part of your life. Now you come face to face with a phenomenon which you consider to violate one of the basic laws of the universe. Scientists say: Two masses will attract one another according to a fixed mathematical rule. It is an inalienable property of matter and space. There are no exceptions. And now you're an exception."

Roger said glumly, "And how."

"You see, Roger," Sarle went on, "for the first time in

history, mankind really has what he considers unbreakable rules. I mean unbreakable. In primitive cultures, a medicine man might use a spell to produce rain. If it didn't work, it didn't upset the validity of magic. It just meant that the shaman had neglected some part of his spell, or had broken a taboo, or offended a god. In modern theocratic cultures, the commandments of the Deity are unbreakable. Still if a man were to break the commandments and yet prosper, it would be no sign that that particular religion was invalid. The ways of Providence are admittedly mysterious and some invisible punishment awaits.

"Today, however, we have rules that *really* can't be broken, and one of them is the existence of gravity. It works even though the man who invokes it has forgotten to mutter em-em-over-ahr-square."

Roger managed a twisted smile, "You're all wrong, Jim. The unbreakable rules have been broken over and over again. Radioactivity was impossible when it was discovered. Energy came out of nowhere; incredible quantities of it. It was as ridiculous as levitation."

"Radioactivity was an objective phenomenon that could be communicated and duplicated. Uranium would fog photographic film for anyone. A Crookes tube could be built by anyone and would deliver an electron stream in identical fashion for all. You—"

"I've tried communicating—"

"I know. But can you tell me, for instance, how *I* might levitate."

"Of course not."

"That limits others to observation only without experimental duplication. It puts your levitation on the same plane with stellar evolution, something to theorize about but never experiment with."

"Yet scientists are willing to devote their lives to astrophysics."

"Scientists are people. They can't reach the stars, so they make the best of it. But they can reach you and to be unable to touch your levitation would be infuriating."

"Jim, they haven't even tried. You talk as though I've been studied. Jim, they won't even consider the problem."

"They don't have to. Your levitation is part of a whole class of phenomena that won't be considered. Telepathy, clairvoyance, prescience, and a thousand other extranatural powers are practically never seriously investigated, even though reported with every appearance of reliability. Rhine's experiments on ESP have annoyed far more scientists than they have intrigued. So you see, they don't have to study you to know they don't want to study you. They know that in advance."

"Is this funny to you, Jim? Scientists refuse to investigate facts; they turn their back on the truth. And you just sit there and grin and make droll statements."

"No, Roger, I know it's serious. And I have no glib explanations for mankind, really. I'm giving you my thoughts. It's what I think. But don't you see? What I'm doing, really, is trying to look at things as they are. It's what you must do. Forget your ideals, your theories, your notions as to what people *ought* to do. Consider what they *are* doing. Once a person is oriented to face facts rather than delusions, problems tend to disappear. At the very least, they fall into their true perspective and become soluble."

Roger stirred restlessly. "Psychiatric gobbledegook! It's like putting your fingers on a man's temple and saying, 'Have faith and you will be cured!' If the poor sap isn't cured, it's because he didn't drum up enough faith. The witch doctor can't lose."

"Maybe you're right, but let's see. What is your problem?"

"No catechism, please. You know my problem so let's not horse around."

"You levitate. Is that it?"

"Let's say it is. It'll do as a first approximation."

"You're not being serious, Roger, but actually you're probably right. It's only a first approximation. After all you're tackling that problem. Jane tells me you've been experimenting."

"Experimenting! Ye Gods, Jim, I'm not experimenting. I'm drifting. I need high-powered brains and equipment. I need a research team and I don't have it."

"Then what's your problem? Second approximation."

Roger said, "I see what you mean. My problem is to get a research team. But I've tried! Man, I've tried till I'm tired of trying."

"How have you tried?"

"I've sent out letters. I've asked—Oh, stop it, Jim. I haven't the heart to go through the patient-on-the-couch routine. You know what I've been doing."

"I know what you've said to people, 'I have a problem. Help me.' Have you tried anything else?"

"Look, Jim. I'm dealing with mature scientists."

"I know. So you reason that the straightforward request is sufficient. Again it's theory against fact. I've told you the difficulties involved in your request. When you thumb a ride on a highway you're making a straightforward request, but most cars pass you by just the same. The point is that the straightforward request has failed. Now what's your problem? Third approximation!"

"To find another approach which won't fail? Is that what you want me to say?"

"It's what you have said, isn't it?"

"So I know it without your telling me."

"Do you? You're ready to quit school, quit your job, quit science. Where's your consistency, Rog? Do you abandon a problem when your first experiment fails? Do you give up when one theory is shown to be inadequate? The same philosophy of experimental science that holds for inanimate objects should hold for people as well."

"All right. What do you suggest I try? Bribery? Threats? Tears?"

James Sarle stood up. "Do you really want a suggestion?"

"Go ahead."

"Do as Dr. Morton said. Take a vacation and to hell with levitation. It's a problem for the future. Sleep in bed and float or don't float; what's the difference. Ignore levitation, laugh at it or even enjoy it. Do anything but worry about it, because it isn't your problem. That's the whole point. It's not your immediate problem. Spend your time considering how to make scientists study something they don't want to study. That is the immediate problem and

that is exactly what you've spent no thinking time on as yet."

Sarle walked to the hall closet and got his coat. Roger went with him. Minutes passed in silence.

Then Roger said without looking up, "Maybe you're right, Jim."

"Maybe I am. Try it and then tell me. Good-by, Roger."

Roger Toomey opened his eyes and blinked at the morning brightness of the bedroom. He called out, "Hey, Jane, where are you?"

Jane's voice answered, "In the kitchen. Where do you think?"

"Come in here, will you?"

She came in. "The bacon won't fry itself, you know."

"Listen, did I float last night?"

"I don't know. I slept."

"You're a help." He got out of bed and slipped his feet into his mules. "Still I don't think I did."

"Do you think you've forgotten how?" There was sudden hope in her voice.

"I haven't forgotten. See!" He slid into the dining room on a cushion of air. "I just have a feeling I haven't floated. I think it's three nights now."

"Well, that's good," said Jane. She was back at the stove. "It's just that a month's rest has done you good. If I had called Jim in the beginning—"

"Oh, please, don't go through that. A month's rest, my eye. It's just that last Sunday I made up my mind what to do. Since then I've relaxed. That's all there is to it."

"What are you going to do?"

"Every spring Northwestern Tech gives a series of seminars on physical topics. I'll attend."

"You mean, go way out to Seattle."

"Of course."

"What will they be discussing?"

"What's the difference? I just want to see Linus Deering."

"But he's the one who called you crazy, isn't he?"

"He did." Roger scooped up a forkful of scrambled eggs. "But he's also the best man of the lot."

He reached for the salt and lifted a few inches out of his chair as he did so. He paid no attention.

He said, "I think maybe I can handle him."

The spring seminars at Northwestern Tech had become a nationally known institution since Linus Deering had joined the faculty. He was the perennial chairman and lent the proceedings their distinctive tone. He introduced the speakers, led the questioning periods, summed up at the close of each morning and afternoon session and was the soul of conviviality at the concluding dinner at the end of the week's work.

All this Roger Toomey knew by report. He could now observe the actual workings of the man. Professor Deering was rather under the middle height, was dark of complexion, and had a luxuriant and quite distinctive mop of wavy brown hair. His wide, thin-lipped mouth, when not engaged in active conversation, looked perpetually on the point of a sly smile. He spoke quickly and fluently, without notes, and seemed always to deliver his comments from a level of superiority that his listeners automatically accepted.

At least, so he had been on the first morning of the seminar. It was only during the afternoon session that the listeners began to notice a certain hesitation in his remarks. Even more, there was an uneasiness about him as he sat on the stage during the delivery of the scheduled papers. Occasionally, he glanced furtively toward the rear of the auditorium.

Roger Toomey, seated in the very last row, observed all this tensely. His temporary glide toward normality that had begun when he first thought there might be a way out was beginning to recede.

On the Pullman to Seattle, he had not slept. He had had visions of himself lifting upward in time to the wheel-clacking, of moving out quietly past the curtains and into the corridor, of being awakened into endless embarrassment by the hoarse shouting of a porter. So he had fastened the curtains with safety pins and had achieved

nothing by that; no feeling of security; no sleep outside a few exhausting snatches.

He had napped in his seat during the day, while the mountains slipped past outside, and arrived in Seattle in the evening with a stiff neck, aching bones, and a general sensation of despair.

He had made his decision to attend the seminar far too late to have been able to obtain a room to himself at the Institute's dormitories. Sharing a room was, of course, quite out of the question. He registered at a downtown hotel, locked the door, closed and locked all the windows, shoved his bed hard against the wall and the bureau against the open side of the bed; then slept.

He remembered no dreams, and when he awoke in the morning he was still lying within the manufactured enclosure. He felt relieved.

When he arrived, in good time, at Physics Hall on the Institute's campus, he found, as he expected, a large room and a small gathering. The seminar sessions were held, traditionally, over the Easter vacation and students were not in attendance. Some fifty physicists sat in an auditorium designed to hold four hundred, clustering on either side of the central aisle up near the podium.

Roger took his seat in the last row, where he would not be seen by casual passersby looking through the high, small windows of the auditorium door, and where the others in the audience would have had to twist through nearly a hundred eighty degrees to see him.

Except, of course, for the speaker on the platform—and for Professor Deering.

Roger did not hear much of the actual proceedings. He concentrated entirely on waiting for those moments when Deering was alone on the platform; when only Deering could see him.

As Deering grew obviously more disturbed, Roger grew bolder. During the final summing up of the afternoon, he did his best.

Professor Deering stopped altogether in the middle of a poorly constructed and entirely meaningless sentence. His audience, which had been shifting in their seats for some time stopped also and looked wonderingly at him.

Deering raised his hand and said, gaspingly, "You! You there!"

Roger Toomey had been sitting with an air of complete relaxation—in the very center of the aisle. The only chair beneath him was composed of two and a half feet of empty air. His legs were stretched out before him on the armrest of an equally airy chair.

When Deering pointed, Roger slid rapidly sidewise. By the time fifty heads turned, he was sitting quietly in a very prosaic wooden seat.

Roger looked this way and that, then stared at Deering's pointing finger and rose.

"Are you speaking to me, Professor Deering?" he asked, with only the slightest tremble in his voice to indicate the savage battle he was fighting within himself to keep that voice cool and wondering.

"What are you doing?" demanded Deering, his afternoon's tension exploding.

Some of the audience were standing in order to see better. An unexpected commotion is as dearly loved by a gathering of research physicists as by a crowd at a baseball game.

"I'm not doing anything," said Roger. "I don't understand you."

"Get out! Leave this hall!"

Deering was beside himself with a mixture of emotions, or perhaps he would not have said that. At any rate, Roger sighed and took his opportunity prayerfully.

He said, loudly and distinctly, forcing himself to be heard over the gathering clamor, "I am Professor Roger Toomey of Carson College. I am a member of the American Physical Association. I have applied for permission to attend these sessions, have been accepted, and have paid my registration fee. I am sitting here as is my right and will continue to do so."

Deering could only say blindly, "Get out!"

"I will not," said Roger. He was actually trembling with a synthetic and self-imposed anger. "For what reason must I get out? What have I done?"

Deering put a shaking hand through his hair. He was quite unable to answer.

Roger followed up his advantage. "If you attempt to evict me from these sessions without just cause, I shall certainly sue the Institute."

Deering said, hurriedly, "I call the first day's session of the Spring Seminars of Recent Advances in the Physical Sciences to a close. Our next session will be in this hall tomorrow at nine in—"

Roger left as he was speaking and hurried away.

There was a knock at Roger's hotelroom door that night. It startled him, froze him in his chair.

"Who is it?" he cried.

The answering voice was soft and hurried. "May I see you?"

It was Deering's voice. Roger's hotel as well as his room number were, of course, recorded with the seminar secretary. Roger had hoped, but scarcely expected, that the day's events would have so speedy a consequence.

He opened the door, said stiffly, "Good evening, Professor Deering."

Deering stepped in and looked about. He wore a very light topcoat that he made no gesture to remove. He held his hat in his hand and did not offer to put it down.

He said, "Professor Roger Toomey of Carson College. Right?" He said it with a certain emphasis, as though the name had significance.

"Yes. Sit down, Professor."

Deering remained standing. "Now what is it? What are you after?"

"I don't understand."

"I'm sure you do. You aren't arranging this ridiculous foolery for nothing. Are you trying to make me seem foolish or is it that you expect to hoodwink me into some crooked scheme? I want you to know it won't work. And don't try to use force now. I have friends who know exactly where I am at this moment. I'll advise you to tell the truth and then get out of town."

"Professor Deering! This is my room. If you are here to bully me, I'll ask you to leave. If you don't go, I'll have you put out."

"Do you intend to continue this . . . this persecution?"

"I have not been persecuting you. I don't know you, sir."

"Aren't you the Roger Toomey who wrote me a letter concerning a case of levitation he wanted me to investigate?"

Roger stared at the man. "What letter is this?"

"Do you deny it?"

"Of course I do. What are you talking about? Have you got the letter?"

Professor Deering lips compressed. "Never mind that. Do you deny you were suspending yourself on wires at this afternoon's sessions?"

"On wires? I don't follow you at all."

"You were levitating!"

"Would you please leave, Professor Deering? I don't think you're well."

The physicist raised his voice. "Do you deny you were levitating?"

"I think you're mad. Do you mean to say I made magician's arrangements in your auditorium? I was never in it before today and when I arrived you were already present. Did you find wires or anything of the sort after I left?"

"I don't know how you did it and I don't care. Do you deny you were levitating?"

"Why, of course I do."

"I saw you. Why are you lying?"

"You saw me levitate? Professor Deering, will you tell me how that's possible? I suppose your knowledge of gravitational forces is enough to tell you that true levitation is a meaningless concept except in outer space. Are you playing some sort of joke on me?"

"Good Heavens," said Deering in a shrill voice, "why won't you tell the truth?"

"I am. Do you suppose that by stretching out my hand and making a mystic pass . . . so . . . I can go sailing off into air." And Roger did so, his head brushing the ceiling.

Deering's head jerked upward, "Ah! There . . . there—"

Roger returned to earth, smiling. "You *can't* be serious."

"You did it again. You just did it."

"Did what, sir?"

"You levitated. You just levitated. You can't deny it."

Roger's eyes grew serious. "I think you're sick, sir."

"I know what I saw."

"Perhaps you need a rest. Overwork—"

"It was *not* a hallucination."

"Would you care for a drink?"

Roger walked to his suitcase while Deering followed his footsteps with bulging eyes. The toes of his shoes touched air two inches from the ground and went no lower.

Deering sank into the chair Roger had vacated.

"Yes, please," he said, weakly.

Roger gave him the whiskey bottle, watched the other drink, then gag a bit. "How do you feel now?"

"Look here," said Deering, "have you discovered a way of neutralizing gravity?"

Roger stared. "Get hold of yourself, Professor. If I had antigravity, I wouldn't use it to play games on you. I'd be in Washington. I'd be a military secret. I'd be—well, I wouldn't be here! Surely all this is obvious to you."

Deering jumped to his feet. "Do you intend sitting in on the remaining sessions?"

"Of course."

Deering nodded, jerked his hat down upon his head and hurried out.

For the next three days, Professor Deering did not preside over the seminar sessions. No reason for his absence was given. Roger Toomey, caught between hope and apprehension, sat in the body of the audience and tried to remain inconspicuous. In this, he was not entirely successful. Deering's public attack had made him notorious while his own strong defense had given him a kind of David versus Goliath popularity.

Roger returned to his hotel room Thursday night after an unsatisfactory dinner and remained standing in the doorway, one foot over the threshold. Professor Deering was gazing at him from within. And another man, a gray fedora shoved well back on his forehead, was seated on Roger's bed.

It was the stranger who spoke. "Come inside, Toomey."

Roger did so. "What's going on?"

The stranger opened his wallet and presented a cellophane window to Roger. He said, "I'm Cannon of the FBI."

Roger said, "You have influence with the government, I take it, Professor Deering."

"A little," said Deering.

Roger said, "Well, am I under arrest? What's my crime?"

"Take it easy," said Cannon. "We've been collecting some data on you, Toomey. Is this your signature?"

He held a letter out far enough for Roger to see, but not to snatch. It was the letter Roger had written to Deering which the latter had sent on to Morton.

"Yes," said Roger.

"How about this one?" The federal agent had a sheaf of letters.

Roger realized that he must have collected every one he had sent out, minus those that had been torn up: "They're all mine," he said, wearily.

Deering snorted.

Cannon said, "Professor Deering tells us that you can float."

"Float? What the devil do you mean, float?"

"Float in the air," said Cannon, stolidly.

"Do you believe anything as crazy as that?"

"I'm not here to believe or not to believe, Dr. Toomey," said Cannon "I'm an agent of the Government of the United States and I've got an assignment to carry out. I'd cooperate if I were you."

"How can I cooperate in something like this? If I came to you and told you that Professor Deering could float in air, you'd have me flat on a psychiatrist's couch in no time."

Cannon said, "Professor Deering has been examined by a psychiatrist at his own request. However, the government has been in the habit of listening very seriously to Professor Deering for a number of years now. Besides, I might as well tell you that we have independent evidence."

"Such as?"

"A group of students at your college have seen you float. Also, a woman who was once secretary to the head of your department. We have statements from all of them."

Roger said, "What kind of statements? Sensible ones that you would be willing to put into the record and show to my congressman?"

Professor Deering interrupted anxiously. "Dr. Toomey, what do you gain by denying the fact that you can levitate? Your own dean admits that you've done something of the sort. He has told me that he will inform you officially that your appointment will be terminated at the end of the academic year. He wouldn't do that for nothing."

"That doesn't matter," said Roger.

"But why won't you admit I saw you levitate?"

"Why should I?"

Cannon said, "I'd like to point out, Dr. Toomey, that if you have any device for counteracting gravity, it would be of great importance to your government."

"Really? I suppose you have investigated my background for possible disloyalty."

"The investigation," said the agent, "is proceeding."

"All right," said Roger, "let's take a hypothetical case. Suppose I admitted I could levitate. Suppose I didn't know how I did it. Suppose I had nothing to give the government but my body and an insoluble problem."

"How can you know it's insoluble?" asked Deering eagerly.

"I once asked you to study such a phenomenon," pointed out Roger, mildly. "You refused."

"Forget that. Look," Deering spoke rapidly, urgently. "You don't have a position at the moment. I can offer you one in my department as associate professor of physics. Your teaching duties will be nominal. Full-time research on levitation. What about it?"

"It sounds attractive," said Roger.

"I think it's safe to say that unlimited government funds will be available."

"What do I have to do? Just admit I can levitate?"

"I know you can. I saw you. I want you to do it now for Mr. Cannon."

Roger's legs moved upward and his body stretched out horizontally at the level of Cannon's head. He turned to one side and seemed to rest on his right elbow.

Cannon's hat fell backward onto the bed.

He yelled: "He floats."

Deering was almost incoherent with excitement. "Do you see it, man?"

"I sure see something."

"Then report it. Put it right down in your report, do you hear me? Make a complete record of it. They won't say there's anything wrong with me. I didn't doubt for a minute that I had seen it."

But he couldn't have been so happy if that were entirely true.

"I don't even know what the climate is like in Seattle," wailed Jane, "and there are a million things I have to do."

"Need any help?" asked Jim Sarle from his comfortable position in the depths of the armchair.

"There's nothing you can do. Oh, dear." And she flew from the room, but unlike her husband, she did so figuratively only.

Roger Toomey came in. "Jane, do we have the crates for the books yet? Hello, Jim. When did you come in? And where's Jane?"

"I came in a minute ago and Jane's in the next room. I had to get past a policeman to get in. Man, they've got you surrounded."

"Um-m-m," said Roger, absently. "I told them about you."

"I know you did. I've been sworn to secrecy. I told them it was a matter of professional confidence in any case. Why don't you let the movers do the packing? The government is paying, isn't it?"

"Movers wouldn't do it right," said Jane, suddenly hurrying in again and flouncing down on the sofa. "I'm going to have a cigarette."

"Break down, Roger," said Sarle, "and tell me what happened."

Roger smiled sheepishly. "As you said, Jim, I took my mind off the wrong problem and applied it to the right one. It just seemed to me that I was forever being faced with two alternatives. I was either crooked or crazy. Deering said that flatly in his letter to Morton. The dean assumed I was crooked and Morton suspected that I was crazy.

"But supposing I could show them that I could really levitate. Well, Morton told me what would happen in that case. Either I would be crooked or the *witness* would be insane. Morton said that . . . he said that if he saw me fly, he'd prefer to believe himself insane than accept the evidence. Of course, he was only being rhetorical. No man would believe in his own insanity while even the faintest alternative existed. I counted on that.

"So I changed my tactics. I went to Deering's seminar. I didn't *tell* him I could float; I showed him, *and then denied I had done it.* The alternative was clear. I was either lying or he . . . not I, mind you, but *he* . . . was mad. It was obvious that he would sooner believe in levitation than doubt his own sanity, once he was really put to the test. All his actions thereafter—his bullying, his trip to Washington, his offer of a job—were all intended only to vindicate his own sanity, not to help me."

Sarle said, "In other words you had made your levitation his problem and not your own."

Roger said, "Did you have anything like this in mind when we had our talk, Jim?"

Sarle shook his head. "I had vague notions, but a man must solve his own problems if they're to be solved effectively. Do you think they'll work out the principle of levitation now?"

"I don't know, Jim. I still can't communicate the subjective aspects of the phenomenon. But that doesn't matter. We'll be investigating them and that's what counts." He struck his balled right fist into the palm of his left hand. "As far as I'm concerned, the important point is that I made them help me."

"Is it?" asked Sarle, softly. "I should say that the important point is that you let them make *you* help *them,* which is a different thing altogether."

Have you ever, in a strange foreign city, encountered someone with whom you could feel kinship? Someone who spoke your own language, with ideas like your own . . . and perhaps goals not too dissimilar to your own?

I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF

by Mack Reynolds

THE PLACE DE FRANCE IS THE TOWN'S HUB. IT marks the end of Boulevard Pasteur, the main drag of the westernized part of the city, and the beginning of Rue de la Liberté, which leads down to the Grand Socco and the Medina. In a three minute walk from the Place De France you can go from an ultra-modern, California-like resort to the Baghdad of Harun-al-Rashid.

It's quite a town, Tangier.

King-size sidewalk cafés occupy three of the strategic corners on the Place de France. The Café de Paris serves the best draft beer in town, gets all the better custom, and has three shoeshine boys attached to the establishment. You can sit of a sunny morning and read the Paris edition of the New York *Herald Tribune* while getting your shoes done up like mirrors for thirty Moroccan francs, which comes to about five cents at current exchange.

You can sit there, after the paper's read, sip your expresso, and watch the people go by.

Tangier is possibly the most cosmopolitan city in the world. In native costume you'll see Berber and Rif, Arab and Blue Man, and occasionally a Senegalese from further south. In European dress you'll see Japs and Chinese, Hindus and Turks, Levantines and Filipinos, North Americans and South Americans, and, of course, even Europeans—from both sides of the Curtain.

In Tangier you'll find some of the world's poorest and some of the richest. The poorest will try to sell you anything from a shoeshine to their not very lily-white bodies, and the richest will avoid your eyes, afraid *you* might try to sell them something.

In spite of recent changes, the town still has its unique qualities. As a result of them the permanent population includes smugglers and blackmarketeers, fugitives from justice and international con men, espionage and counter-espionage agents, homosexuals, nymphomaniacs, alcoholics, drug addicts, displaced persons, ex-royalty, and subversives of every flavor. Local law limits the activities of few of these.

Like I said, it's quite a town.

I looked up from my *Herald Tribune* and said, "Hello, Paul. Anything new cooking?"

He sank into the chair opposite me and looked around for the waiter. The tables were all crowded and since mine was a face he recognized, he assumed he was welcome to intrude. It was more or less standard procedure at the Café de Paris. It wasn't a place to go if you wanted to be alone.

Paul said, "How are you, Rupert? Haven't seen you for donkey's years."

The waiter came along and Paul ordered a glass of beer. Paul was an easygoing, sallow-faced little man. I vaguely remembered somebody saying he was from Liverpool and in exports.

"What's in the newspaper?" he said, disinterestedly.

"Pogo and Albert are going to fight a duel," I told him, "and Lil Abner is becoming a rock'n'roll singer."

He grunted.

"Oh," I said, "the intellectual type." I scanned the front page. "The Russkies have put up another manned satellite."

"They have, eh? How big?"

"Several times bigger than anything we Americans have."

The beer came and looked good, so I ordered a glass too.

Paul said, "What ever happened to those poxy flying saucers?"

"What flying saucers?"

A French girl went by with a poodle so finely clipped as to look as though it'd been shaven. The girl was in the latest from Paris. Every pore in place. We both looked after her.

"You know what everybody was seeing a few years ago. Its too bad one of these bloody manned satellites wasn't up then. Maybe they would've seen one."

"That's an idea," I said.

We didn't say anything else for awhile and I began to wonder if I could go back to my paper without rubbing him the wrong way. I didn't know Paul very well, but, for that matter, it's comparatively seldom you ever get to know anybody very well in Tangier. Largely, cards are played close to the chest.

My beer came and a plate of tapas for us both. Tapas at the Café de Paris are apt to be potato chips, a few anchovies, olives, and possibly some cheese. Free lunch, they used to call it in the States.

Just to say something, I said, "Where do you think they came from?" And when he looked blank, I added, "The flying saucers."

He grinned. "From Mars or Venus, or someplace."

"Ummmm," I said. "Too bad none of them ever crashed, or landed on the Yale football field and said 'Take me to your cheerleader,' or something."

Paul yawned and said, "That was always the trouble with those crackpot blokes' explanations of them. If they were aliens from space, then why not show themselves?"

I ate one of the potato chips. It'd been cooked in rancid olive oil.

I said, "Oh, there are various answers to that one. We could probably sit around here and think of two or three that made sense."

Paul was mildly interested. "Like what?"

"Well, hell, suppose for instance there's this big Galactic League of civilized planets. But it's restricted, see. You're not eligible for membership until you, well, say until you've developed space flight. Then you're invited into the club. Meanwhile, they send secret missions down from time to time to keep an eye on your progress."

Paul grinned at me. "I see you read the same poxy stuff I do."

A Moorish girl went by dressed in a neatly tailored gray jellaba, European style high-heeled shoes, and a pinkish silk veil so transparent that you could see she wore lipstick. Very provocative, dark eyes can be over a veil. We both looked after her.

I said, "Or, here's another one. Suppose you have a very advanced civilization on, say, Mars."

"Not Mars. No air, and too bloody dry to support life."

"Don't interrupt, please," I said with mock severity. "This is a very old civilization and as the planet began to lose its water and air, it withdrew underground. Uses hydroponics and so forth, husbands its water and air. Isn't that what we'd do, in a few million years, if Earth lost its water and air?"

"I suppose so," he said. "Anyway, what about them?"

"Well, they observe how man is going through a scientific boom, an industrial boom, a population boom. A boom, period. Any day now he's going to have practical spaceships. Meanwhile, he's also got the H-Bomb, and the way he beats the drums on both sides of the Curtain, he's not against using it, if he could get away with it."

Paul said, "I got it. So they're scared and are keeping an eye on us. That's an old one. I've read that a dozen times, dished up different."

I shifted my shoulders. "Well, it's one possibility."

"I got a better one. How's this. There's this alien life

form that's way ahead of us. Their civilization is so old that they don't have any records of when it began and how it was in the early days. They've gone beyond things like wars and depressions and revolutions and greed for power, or any of these things giving us a bad time here on Earth. They're all like scholars, get it? And some of them are pretty jolly well taken by Earth, especially the way we are right now, with all the problems, get it? Things developing so fast we don't know where we're going or how we're going to get there."

I finished my beer and clapped my hands for Mouley. "How do you mean, 'where we're going'?"

"Well, take half the countries in the world today. They're trying to industrialize, modernize, catch up with the advanced countries. Look at Egypt and Israel, and India and China, and Yugoslavia and Brazil, and all the rest. Trying to drag themselves up to the level of the advanced countries, and all using different methods of doing it. But look at the so-called advanced countries. Up to their bottoms in problems. Juvenile delinquents, climbing crime and suicide rates, the loony-bins full of the balmy, unemployment, threat of war, spending all their money on armaments instead of things like schools. All the bloody mess of it. Why, a man from Mars would be fascinated, like."

Mouley came shuffling up in his babouche slippers and we both ordered another schooner of beer.

Paul said seriously, "You know there's only one big snag in this sort of talk. I've sorted the whole thing out before, and you always come up against this brick wall. Where are they, these observers, or scholars, or spies or whatever they are? Sooner or later we'd nab one of them. You know, Scotland Yard, or the F.B.I., or Russia's secret police, or the French Sûreté, or Interpol. This world is so deep in police, counterespionage outfits, and security agents that an alien would slip up in time, no matter how much he'd been trained. Sooner or later, he'd slip up, and they'd nab him."

I shook my head. "Not necessarily. The first time I ever considered this possibility, it seemed to me that such an alien would base himself in London or New York.

Somewhere where he could use the libraries for research, get the daily newspapers and the magazines. Be right in the center of things. But now I don't think so. I think he'd be right here in Tangier."

"Why Tangier?"

"It's the one town in the world where anything goes. Nobody gives a damn about you or your affairs. For instance, I've known you a year or more now, and I haven't the slightest idea of how you make your living."

"That's right," Paul admitted. "In this town you seldom even ask a man were he's from. He can be British, a White Russian, a Basque, or a Sikh and nobody could care less. Where are *you* from, Rupert?"

"California," I told him.

"No, you're not," he grinned.

I was taken aback. "What do you mean?"

"I felt your mind probe back a few minutes ago when I was talking about Scotland Yard or the F.B.I. possibly flushing an alien. Telepathy is a sense not trained by the humanoids. If they had it, your job—and mine—would be considerably more difficult. Let's face it, in spite of these human bodies we're disguised in, neither of us is a humanoid. Where are you really from, Rupert?"

"Aldebaran," I said. "How about you?"

"Deneb," he told me, shaking.

We had a laugh and ordered another beer.

"What're you doing here on Earth?" I asked him.

"Researching for one of our meat trusts. We're protein eaters. Humanoid flesh is considered quite a delicacy. How about you?"

"Scouting the place for thrill tourists. My job is to go around to these backward cultures and help stir up intertribal or international conflicts—all according to how advanced they are. Then our tourists come in—well shielded, of course—and get their kicks watching it."

Paul frowned. "That sort of practice could spoil an awful lot of good meat."

This is a story of . . . no matter!

THE MAN ON TOP

by R. Bretnor

WHO WAS THE FIRST MAN TO REACH THE TOP of Nanda Urbat? Any school kid can tell you. *Toughest mountain in the world—26,318 feet, conquered finally by Geoffrey Barbank.*

I was forgotten. I was just the fellow who went along. The press gave Barbank the credit. He was the Man on Top, the Man on the Top of the World.

Only he wasn't, really. He knows that it's a lie. And that hurts.

A mountain, you know, is a quest, a mystery, a challenge to the spirit. Mallory, who died on Everest, knew that. But Barbank climbed Nanda Urbat simply to keep some other man from being first. Mysteries did not exist for him, and anyone who felt the sense of mystery was a fool. All men were fools to Barbank—or enemies.

I found that out the day I joined the expedition in Darjeeling. "The town's in a sweat about some flea-bag Holy Man," he told me after lunch. "Let's go and look the old fraud over. Might have a bit of fun."

So the two of us walked down from the hotel, and, all the way, he boasted of his plans. I can still see his face,

big, cold, rectangular, as he discussed the men who'd tried and failed. Of course they'd muffed it. You couldn't climb Nanda Urbat on the cheap. He'd do things differently. All his equipment was better than the best that the many others had had. Because he had designed it. Because it had cost a mint.

It made me angry. But I had come too far to be turned back. I let him talk.

We turned into the compound of a temple. There was a quiet crowd there, squatting in the dust, and many monkeys. By a stone wall, under a huge umbrella, the Holy Man was seated on a woven mat. His long, white hair framed the strangest face I've ever seen—moon-round, unlined, perfectly symmetrical. His eyes were closed. Against the pale brown skin, his full lips curved upward like the horns of a Turkish bow. It was a statue's face, smiling a statue's smile, utterly serene.

The people seemed waiting for something. As we came through the crowd, no one spoke. But Barbank paid no heed. We halted up in front; and he talked on.

"What's more," he was saying, "I don't intend to bother with filthy Sherpa porters for the upper camps. Planes will drop the stuff."

That set me off. "The Sherpas are brave men," I told him, "and good mountaineers."

"Rot," he snapped. "They're beasts of burden." He pointed at the Holy Man. "There's a sample for you. Look at that smirk. Pleased as punch with his own hocus-pocus—dirt, his nakedness, and all. They've made no progress since the Year One."

The Holy Man was naked, or nearly so, but he was clean; his loincloth was spotless white. "Perhaps," I answered, "they're trying for something else."

And slowly, then, the Holy Man looked up. He spoke to Barbank. "We are," he said.

I met his eyes—and suddenly the statue came alive. It was as though I had seen only the shell of his serenity; now I saw its source. I felt that it was born, not in any rejection of the world, but in a knowledge of every human agony and joy.

"Yes, we are trying," the Holy Man went on. His voice

was beautiful and strangely accented, and there was humor in it, and irony. "But for something else? I do not think so. It is just that we are trying differently, we of the East and West—and sometimes one cannot succeed without the other." Pausing, he measured Barbank with those eyes. "That is why I can help you, if you will only ask."

Barbank's mouth curled. "He's heard the gossip down in the bazaar," he said to me. "Well, he won't get a penny out of me."

The smile danced. "Must I explain? A mountain is much more than rock and ice. No man can conquer the hardest mountain in the world. His conquest can be only of himself."

I shivered. That was what Mallory had said.

"You damned old humbug!" Barbank's laugh roared out. "Are you trying to tell me *you* can help me reach the top?"

"I think I'd put it differently," the Holy Man replied. "To be precise, I must say this. You never will achieve your heart's desire without my aid. Your ways of doing things is not quite good enough."

Barbank's neck reddened. "Oh, isn't it?" he snarled. "Well, come along and watch! I can use one more mangy porter, I suppose."

The Holy Man raised his fragile hands. "Thank you—but no," he said gently.

Barbank spat in the dust. He pivoted and strode off, pushing roughly through the murmuring crowd.

It was then I decided that he must never be the Man on Top.

It is a long way from Darjeeling through Nepal to that dreadful mountain which the Tibetans call the Father of the Snows. The journey takes some weeks. We were eleven white men, but we soon found that we were not an expedition in the usual sense. We were Barbank's retainers, walled off by his contempt.

The others left him pretty much alone. I couldn't. The Holy Man's prediction was my obsession now. At every chance, I talked to Barbank about the mysteries of the peak—the awful Snow Men, whom the Tibetans all swear

exist, and the same dark, pulsating flying things which Smythe had seen high on haunted Everest. I said that, very possibly, Madsen, James, and Leverhome had reached the summit first—that he might get to be the Man on Top only to find some evidence they'd left.

By the time we reached our Base Camp on the Great East Glacier, I had become his enemy, who had to be put to shame. And there was only one way to do that. Though Kenningshaw and Lane were better men, he chose me for the assault. I had to be there, to see the Man on Top with my own eyes. That was fine. Because I could only stop Barbank from being first on top by being first myself.

We followed the traditional approach—up the Great East Glacier and the West Wall of the South Col—up to Camp Five, nearly five miles above the sea. And, all the way, the mountain laughed at us. Against us it sent its cruel light cavalry—wind, mist, and snow—harassing us, keeping us aware of deadly forces held in reserve.

Yet, when we stood at Camp Five and watched the plane from India trying to drop the final camp higher than any man had camped before, the sky was clear. We watched the pilot try, and circle, and lose eight separate loads. The ninth remained; its grapples held.

"I bought two dozen, all identical," said Barbank. "I told you there's nothing these natives do that we can't do better."

He and I reached Camp Six, at over twenty-six thousand feet, late the next afternoon. We set the tent up, and weighted it with cylinders of oxygen. We ate supper out of self-heating cans and crawled into our sleeping bags.

We rose before dawn, and found that the fine weather still held. Barbank looked at the vast dark mountain, at the broad yellow band beneath the summit pyramid, at the depths of rock and glacial ice below.

"And so I won't succeed?" he taunted me. "*You bloody fool.*"

We went up. We mounted to the ridge, and stared down the awful precipice of the South Face. We worked toward the second step, where James and Leverhome were last seen. Small, keen lancets of wind thrust through

our clothes down to the flowing blood. The summit was hidden behind its plume of cloud.

Toward that plume we worked. Even with oxygen, it was agony. Up there, the air is thin. The thinness is in your flesh and bones, and in your brain. You move, and pause, and your whole attention is confined to the next move.

On such a mountain, physically, there can be no question over who shall lead. But morally there can. I remember husbanding my strength, giving Barbank a grudging minimum of aid I can remember Barbank weakening, relinquishing the lead high on a summit slab. I can remember the look in Barbank's eyes.

The hours dragged. I moved. I ached. I forced myself to try to move again. Endlessly.

Then, without warning, the cloud-plume enfolded us. The Top of the World was fifty feet away. I knew that I could be the Man on Top, that I had Barbank where I wanted him. I stopped. I don't know why. I laughed and waved him on. He passed by, hating me.

He reached the summit edge. He turned his head. I could not see his lips, but I could feel their curl of triumph and their contempt. He turned again. And, as he turned, a single gust screamed past us and laid the summit bare. I saw its rock. I saw a wide depression packed with snow.

But in the center there was no snow at all, for it had melted. On his mat, naked and serene, the Holy Man was waiting. He smiled upon us with his statue's smile.

In that tone of pleased surprise with which one welcomes an unexpected guest, he spoke to Barbank. "How did you get up here?"

A strange sound came from Barbank's leather mask. Automatically, he pointed—at the harsh summit, the ridge, the slabs, the miles of rock and ice and snow.

The Holy Man lifted both his hands. His gesture was exquisite, polite, incredulous.

"You mean," he said, "you *walked?*"

Some people telepath mind-to-mind and as easily as they use the phone. Some need an assist—an object belonging to the person with whom they want to communicate, or actual physical contact with the person. Some "receive" in symbols. One would think a telepath would always be able to understand other people's motives and symbols, but like nontelepaths, even the best telepath may cloud his information with "coloring"—his own ideas and preconceptions associated with an object or a concept.

FALSE IMAGE

by Jay Williams

HAKON WAS JUST CLIMBING INTO HIS GROUND glider when the Inspector appeared, a tiny dark spot in the sky. With an inward sigh, Hakon wriggled out of the hatch and stood waiting. The first delicate touch of the other's mind reached him, questioning, then amused: the Inspector had caught that sigh.

In moments, he dropped down. The wings of the flier folded back and the machine stood quietly as the Inspector climbed out of its head. It looked something like a pelican, only of an outrageous lavender color. Like all the

machines of the People, it was made to resemble a creature of their own world—it was not only part of their artistry, of that impulse to find beauty in the meanest objects, but part of their sense of the humor in all things as well.

Hakon and the Inspector exchanged greetings. They used no words, only their minds met and registered gratification at meeting. Their conversation was an incredibly rapid series of symbols, of imaginative pictures or concepts, with here and there a word or two when it might be needed for explicitness, or perhaps for sheer amusement—for although the People were telepathic they had a written language, and they still made puns.

—I'm sorry to break in on you, said the Inspector. It always happens that way, doesn't it?

—It's what we used to call Fate. Like looking for a reference in a pile of books, and finding it always in the very last one of the pile. I might have known you'd come just as I was planning to leave, said Hakon.

—I won't be long. I have to visit Rush's farm, too. How are the crops?

They both turned to look at the gray-green fields. Acre upon acre, the *luagh* stretched over the rolling hills toward the forest in the distance, their thick fleshy leaves writhing sensuously under the hot sun which they clearly enjoyed. Into the minds of both men came their emanations: a kind of steady, simple humming, senseless but happy, like the drone of a hive of bees.

—No complaints. I'll need some more spray; there's a kind of glossy green beetle that's begun to attack them. Not too serious . . .

—Beetle-battle?

—Quote: The singing rocks, the searing spray. Dolman, the Water Poet.

They laughed together. Then the Inspector said,—When do you plan to begin combining?

—Rush and Teller and I can use the same combine. In about three weeks.

—Any trouble with the natives?

—No. I've seen three or four. . . . I think they've established a colony in the forest near those barrows.

He made a picture in his mind of a glade in the forest where three or four large mounds of earth covered the ruins of what had once been buildings. Both men thought together of the natives, the hairy giants with their crude weapons, running lithely forward. They had killed Derk, a farmer in another sector, smashing him and his ground glider to a pulp under their stone hammers, and vanishing into the forests again.

Hakon could not suppress a shudder.

—I'm sorry for them, he said. But they fill me with such revulsion.

—I know. One or two members of the Council have even talked of punishing them, perhaps of killing one as an example. . . .

Hakon's thought broke in:—What? Never that. Why, it would reduce us to the level of beasts!

—Of course. It was overruled. It's too bad . . . if we could only make contact with them. But their poor minds have no capacity for thought transference, and their speech is so crude, what little we've heard of it, that many people think it has no words. In any case, our own voices are too high-pitched for their ears; they don't seem to hear us.

—Do you think they reason? Hakon mused. Or is it mere instinct that moves them?

—I don't know. Most of the best of our biologists incline toward instinct.

Hakon's eyes were on the distant forest.

—If we could only capture a few of them.

—Yes. But they're too skillful at woodsmanship for us. And the few we've taken have killed themselves before we could try to reach them.

—They are almost like men, said Hakon wistfully. Only they are so huge, so coarse, so furry. They are too big, he finished sadly.

—In any case, Hakon, you're not afraid?

—No. I keep my paralyzer handy. I'm not afraid anyway.

—Good. Well, give me your requirements, and I'll be off.

It was a matter of a second or two for Hakon to give

the figures on type and quantity of spray, as well as his needs in food, fuel, some new books and plays, and *draga*, a mildly hypnotic drug taken for relaxation. The Inspector got into his flier, and his last thought came as the machine flipped open its wings and shot skyward: — Six weeks more and you can go back to your wives again; happy henpecking! Then he was gone.

Hakon returned to his ground glider and squeezed through the hatch once more. He snapped it behind him and settled into the padded seat which held the lower part of his body firmly and comfortably in place. In this position, he could move his arms easily and could see through the round ports on either side of him. He pushed the starting level and almost noiselessly the machine began to move, its hundreds of spherical bearings rotating beneath it. Below Hakon were fuel chambers, storage chambers, and tools neatly racked, and because the machine adjusted to the slightest change in the contours of the earth, he felt no jars or jolts but rode smoothly and easily in the control chamber alone.

He passed the edge of the first field, and the *luagh* all turned toward him. They had no minds, but the millions of tiny sense buds on the leaves knew the vibrations of his motors, imperceptible as they were to the ear. In his imagination, the *luagh* were transformed into steaming recipes—or into cold slices eaten with rhiam sauce—the root, ground and powdered, had medicinal uses also, and in fact, every part of the plant was good and useful and valuable. It was one of the basic crops of the People. They had found and used other plants on this very planet, but none satisfied their requirements so thoroughly as the *luagh*, which they had brought with them from Home.

Hakon turned northward, past the tiny post which winked a signal for half a mile and which, if any large beast tried to plunder the crop, would activate the warning light both at the farm and in the ground glider, giving instantly the location of the trouble. Once or twice, enormous beasts grotesquely crowned with wide-spreading, heavy antlers, had come to eat the plants. Hakon had driven them off easily with mild electrical charges. Now

and then, in some cases—though so far, not to Hakon's farm—the natives would come. They did not eat the *luagh* but seemed to have a brainless desire to destroy them, or perhaps they took pleasure in tormenting the People in any way that they could; in such instances the mere appearance of a ground glider was generally enough to send them running for cover, and they could run very fast, faster than a glider. "Generally enough"—but not enough in one case, at least. Poor Derk . . .

He shook off the thought and glanced at his gauges, and then at the network of fine, luminous lines that was his map. He looked through the ports at row after row of plants, a geometric scoring across the earth, gray-green and swaying gently to the touch of the sun. At Home, the sun was dim and dying, the sky darker than this, but the earth was much the same. The People were dispersing throughout the immensity of space, some never to find land, others, like the fortunate colonists of whom Hakon was one, to find a new earth, to plant the *luagh* again, to make farms and the little towns the People favored, to pick up once more the arts of life: dancing, painting, weaving, mind-music, the making of artifacts, and love, all those things which made being alive so delightful and so precious.

He was approaching the northern boundary, that closest to the forest. The ground dipped down into a gully where a lively stream purled and winked among gray boulders. Beyond it, there lay a patch of green marsh where rushes waved, and then the tall, thick, dark trees. Hakon slowed the ground glider. He was about to swing eastward when he saw movement below him.

It was a native. Easily three times Hakon's height, he stood knee-deep in the stream. A large, shaggy, four-legged beast, one of those predators that sometimes crept howling about the farms toward the end of the harvest season and stole scraps of *luagh* after they had been cut and baled, was leaping up on him. The native fended the creature off with a stick, struck at it, then gave ground. Water splashed up about both the combatants.

Hakon gripped the steering lever hard, but he could not move, not so much as to turn his head away from the

port. Higher leaped the beast, and the native, dodging and ducking, waved the stick. His mouth, full of long white teeth, was open, and Hakon suddenly heard him bellow, a wild, heart-shaking cry.

He looked so much like a human being—that was it. In spite of his hairiness, in spite of his bestial teeth and his coarse, pallid skin, he was shaped not unlike one of the People. He might be torn and mauled by the beast, his blood washing out in the stream, his life gone—that life that was so dear, even to these primitive creatures.

Abruptly, Hakon made up his mind. He drove forward and down the slope. Neither of the fighters had noticed the approach of his silent machine. He was very close to them, when he set the aiming device of his paralyzer upon the beast and tapped the stud.

The dart sped unerringly to its target. The beast gave one convulsive leap which carried it to the bank of the stream, and then stiffened and fell, half in the water. With its last strength it dragged itself up a little way on land, and then lay still, only twitching a trifle.

The native stood as if himself paralyzed. Then, turning his head from side to side, he looked up and saw Hakon's glider.

For an instant, Hakon was confused. He had not known what to expect as a result of his interference, for he was accustomed to the touching of minds and involuntarily had looked for the quick glow of thanks. In any case, he had come too close, and now, although he tried to swing his machine aside, he was not quick enough. For the native, unpredictable like all his kind—or, it may be, acting only upon some triggered instinct, and not reason at all—rushed up the bank at him.

The native was fully as tall as the top of the glider. He seized it in both his hands, just under the ports. There was a loud snap as the sending antenna broke. Under the great weight of the native's muscles, the machine toppled.

Hakon was not hurt, but his world was insanely upside-down. He lay on his side, pressed tight against his padding. One of the ports was dark; through the other, he could see part of a cheek and neck, the shaggy bristle of

hair, the large pores, the blotched, pale-brownish skin. He fumbled with the levers, racing his power in the hope of forcing the machine out of the other's grasp. It was useless.

There was a clang that reverberated through the glider. Inching himself up a trifle, Hakon could see the native's arm rise and fall. Again came the clang.

He understood, then, that his enemy was holding down the glider with one hand and hammering at it with the stick, to smash it as Derk's machine had been smashed.

He turned to the paralyzer. If the native's body were by some chance over the firing port, he could send a dart into him. The steady clanging made his head spin. He pressed down the stud. There were two clicks as darts sped out, and then the red light blinked. That meant the last dart had been expended. But the clanging went on; evidently, he had done no damage.

There were more darts below, in the belly of the glider. He unclasped the padded side of his seat and with some difficulty stretched out a leg, feeling for the step. He touched bent and twisted metal. At the same time, he felt the whole machine shake to an even stronger blow, as if the native had exchanged his stick for something heavier.

He crawled back up. He was very calm, terribly calm. He looked into the face of death and sighed, for although he did not fear it, he loathed leaving a world so full of potential happiness. The faces of his wives swam into his mind's eye, smiling and affectionate, but he banished them for it was too painful.

There was one more chance, but it was one he was reluctant to take for it meant touching the native. If he could break the glass of the upper port and reach out his arm far enough to get hold of, say, one of those lank greasy locks of hair, with such a physical contact he might focus all the power of his mind into one single bolt that would stun the enemy. It was a thing that had once or twice been done by some of the People, in danger. It took enormous energy, enormous concentration, and it required absolutely a physical meeting of bodies as if the energy of the mind needed a channel of flesh along which to pass.

It was worth trying. The alternative was to lie still, resigned like an old man, waiting for death. And Hakon was in the prime of life.

He snapped open the small tool compartment at his right side. There was a case of wrenches there. Somehow, he got one of them out although the machine was now shaking and rattling like a living thing. Turning his face aside, he struck the glass. It broke free, leaving only one or two jagged pieces in the circular frame. He dashed these out with the wrench, then dropped the tool and twisting his body pushed out his arm as far as he could.

His groping fingers closed on hair, rough and wet and harsh. He shuddered. Then, shutting his eyes he took a deep breath, summoned up all his powers, and relaxed his mind, focusing it upon the image of the native.

He became aware, distantly and vaguely, of a great turmoil. Anger and fear swept into his mind, and a horror stronger than anything he had ever experienced before. But it was not a horror of the manlike creature outside; on the contrary, it was aimed inward, at himself.

Then suddenly the flailing and banging stopped. There was silence.

Into his brain came a blind, aimless question: *Who? Who?*

A great thrill swept over him, a spasm of excitement almost like that of love. He was touching the mind of the native!

Again, the questioning searched him, not in words, but a gigantic interrogation. And then the thought: *Alive? A reasoning being, like myself?*

He formed the emotion of friendship, a sense of identity and of peace, trying to keep himself receptive. After a long moment, he was conscious of a similar fumbling thought that reached him. And along with it, the question, stronger this time: *Who? What are you?*

He thought his name: Hakon. A farmer.

A name, strange and yet oddly similar in sound to one of the names he knew, shaped in his head. *Jon.*

He thought again: Peace, calm, friendship.

Slowly and tentatively at first, with many blank pauses, with images that grew clearer and clearer with practice,

then with hurrying symbols that could be framed in the fraction of a second, with large and nearly abstract emotions and wellings of sensation like waves of color, they communicated. There were words that meant nothing, words that overlapped images, questions and answers that needed no words but rested upon feelings common to both.

—I am a man.

—I also am a man.

—But you are not like us.

—No one is exactly like anyone else.

Images of great towering cities, then of buildings shaking down, of rosy clouds and flames and ruins smoking, and people running.

—This is my world. It was once great. We keep the legends and stories alive.

—How did they die?

—It was a war, a terrible war of destruction.

—My people do not kill.

—Neither do mine . . . now. Not each other. We are content with what we have.

—But you kill us.

—We kill only the beasts, for food or protection.

—Protection? Why did you turn on me when I saved you from the beast that attacked you?

—What? Attacked me?

And with that, Hakon became aware of a great, gusty surge of amusement from the other, of humor to match his own sense of humor. At the same time he heard that wild crying noise, and it came to him that it was laughter, on a different note from the laughter of his own People but laughter nevertheless.

—Attacking me? said the native. —It was my *dog*. We were playing.

—*Dog?*

—A pet. A friend, although a lesser creature. He was jumping at my stick, in a game.

Then, with a shade of hostility:—And you killed him.

—No, of course not. He is only temporarily asleep. He will be as well as ever in a little while.

There was a surge of relief, mixed with the sense of

wonder:—And you tried to save my life? Of course, how could you know . . . ?

Hakon himself could not help laughing. He felt, too, the native's own sense of astonishment at his amusement. Then came the question, full of pleasure: —So you have a sense of humor, too?

—Certainly. A *dog* you call the beast? It is like what we call a *nakko*.

He made the image of a *nakko*, frisking on its many short legs, grinning all over its happy face, gamboling at the feet of farmers as they walked through the *luagh* fields.

At the same time, he felt the other's mind withdraw.

—What's the matter? he asked.

—That. You have taken our earth away and filled it with *those*.

—We have taken nothing. Is there no room in these huge fields for both of us?

—But those things. Great bunches of worms as high as my knee.

—Worms? They are plants. We call them *luagh*.

—Worms!

Hakon saw them suddenly, as the native saw them: living, writhing animals, but larger than they should be, unbearably soft, slimy, blind, with an overtone of something nasty.

He thought mildly: —They are only plants. They are like these others, the trees about you, the flowers, the grass. They have chlorophyll in their veins. There is nothing nasty about them, nothing more than root and leaf.

—Maybe not . . . but it is how we think of them.

Hakon waited for a moment. Then he said: —Is that why you hate us so?

In reply, there swept into his mind a sensation of unutterable hatred, so violent that it shook him. In an instant, it ebbed away.

—It is very ancient, very deep-rooted with us, the native said.

And Hakon saw the image the other saw, something huge, scaly and poisonous, with a flat, deadly head and

staring eyes, the upper part of the body reared up as if to strike. With the image came the word, *snake.*

—That is why we hate you, said the native. To be hunted by such things, to see them gliding evilly over our meadows among great clumps of worms . . . do you wonder at us? Do you wonder some of us would rather die than fall into your hands?

—But it is my ground glider, said Hakon, full of astonishment. —It is made in the image of a gentle domestic animal on my own world, the *okalasir.* It is our joke, that the animals we use to help herdsmen should be the machines we use to "herd" the *luagh* plants.

—It is a machine?

—Of course. It is not me.

There was a dark, doubtful moment. Then Hakon said quietly: —Let me get out, and I will show you myself.

Doubt still, and some fear and abhorrence. Then that was subdued, and Hakon could feel the strong, conscious effort that subdued it. He felt a quiver in the machine as the native stirred.

—I am getting up, said the native. But something has caught my hair.

—I must let go of you. We will lose the contact of our minds. Will you trust me? Don't be afraid.

—Very well. Come out, then.

Hakon let go the bunch of hair. His fingers were stiff and cramped, and he had to flex them for a moment. Through the broken port, he saw the native's eyes, round and blue and staring. Then the machine rocked as it was released, and the native got to his feet.

Hakon reached up and opened the port. He pulled himself through it and crawled away from it. He stood and looked up blinking at the native's face.

He could not see himself as the other saw him: utterly smooth of skin, small, fragile, shining like an opal, his little golden eyes set obliquely above high cheekbones, his peaked lip that made him seem to be grinning constantly, the slender stalks of his antennae springing from the sides of his head, the tiny bunches of his rudimentary wings drooping from his shoulder blades like crumpled flower petals. But he saw the native's face change; although they

were so different, he could recognize a smile when he saw one.

They stood for a moment, looking at each other. Then Hakon, suddenly fearful and desiring once more the contact of their minds, reached out his hand. The native held out his but it was so big that Hakon could clasp only two fingers of it.

—Elves, said the native. No one would believe it.

—Elves?

—Little People.

—I don't understand you.

—Never mind.

Shyly, a kind of warmth, a closeness, grew in both their minds. And simultaneously, the thought crystallized in both:

—Let us go to my people.

Zenna Henderson has created a group of telepaths who migrate to other worlds and to ours to form a new life when their own world is destroyed. "Ararat" is the first of the stories about The People, and it conveys with skill, simplicity, and understanding their nostalgia for the home lost and their hopes and fears in the one new-found.

Although The People are endowed with several psionic abilities that may be new to the reader (such as "platting the twishers"), Miss Henderson writes about them so intimately we have to suspect that her knowledge is much more advanced than ours.

The editor of Fantasy and Science Fiction found this story "more deeply moving" on each editorial re-reading. This has been our reaction not only to "Ararat" but to the Henderson stories that followed, each adding more to the richness of the legend of The People.

ARARAT

by Zenna Henderson

WE'VE HAD TROUBLE WITH TEACHERS IN Cougar Canyon. It's just an Accommodation school anyway, isolated and so unhandy to anything. There's

really nothing to hold a teacher. But the way The People bring forth their young, in quantities and with regularity, even our small Group can usually muster the nine necessary for the County School Superintendent to arrange for the schooling for the year.

Of course I'm past school age, Canyon school age, and have been for years, but if the tally came up one short in the Fall, I'd go back for a post-graduate course again. But now I'm working on a college level because Father finished me off for my high school diploma two summers ago. He's promised me that if I do well this year I'll get to go Outside next year and get my training and degree so I can be the teacher and we won't have to go Outside for one any more. Most of the kids would just as soon skip school as not, but the Old Ones don't hold with ignorance and the Old Ones have the last say around here.

Father is the head of the school board. That's how I get in on lots of school things the other kids don't. This summer when he wrote to the County Seat that we'd have more than our nine again this fall and would they find a teacher for us, he got back a letter saying they had exhausted their supply of teachers who hadn't heard of Cougar Canyon and we'd have to dig up our own teacher this year. That "dig up" sounded like a dirty crack to me since we have the graves of four past teachers in the far corner of our cemetery. They sent us such old teachers, the homeless, the tottering, who were trying to piece out the end of their lives with a year here and a year there in jobs no one else wanted because there's no adequate pension system in the state and most teachers seem to die in harness. And their oldness and their tottering were not sufficient in the Canyon where there are apt to be shocks for Outsiders—unintentional as most of them are.

We haven't done so badly the last few years, though. The Old Ones say we're getting adjusted—though some of the non-conformists say that The Crossing thinned our blood. It might be either or both or the teachers are just getting tougher. The last two managed to last until just before the year ended. Father took them in as far as Kerry Canyon and ambulances took them on in. But they were all right after a while in the sanatorium and they're

doing okay now. Before them, though, we usually had four teachers a year.

Anyway, Father wrote to a Teachers Agency on the coast and after several letters each way, he finally found a teacher.

He told us about it at the supper table.

"She's rather young," he said, reaching for a toothpick and tipping his chair back on its hind legs.

Mother gave Jethro another helping of pie and picked up her own fork again. "Youth is no crime," she said, "and it'll be a pleasant change for the children."

"Yes, though it seems a shame." Father prodded at a back tooth and Mother frowned at him. I wasn't sure if it was for picking his teeth or for what he said. I knew he meant it seemed a shame to get a place like Cougar Canyon so early in a career. It isn't that we're mean or cruel, you understand. it's only that they're Outsiders and we sometimes forget—especially the kids.

"She doesn't *have* to come," said Mother. "She could say no."

"Well, now—" Father tipped his chair forward. "Jethro, no more pie. You go on out and help 'Kiah bring in the wood. Karen, you and Lizbeth get started on the dishes. Hop to it, kids."

And we hopped, too. Kids do to fathers in the Canyon, though I understand they don't always Outside. It annoyed me because I knew Father wanted us out of the way so he could talk adult talk to Mother, so I told Lizbeth I'd clear the table and then worked as slowly as I could, and as quietly, listening hard.

"She couldn't get any other job," said Father. "The agency told me they had placed her twice in the last two years and she didn't finish the year either place."

"Well," said Mother, pinching in her mouth and frowning. "If she's that bad, why on earth did you hire her for the Canyon?"

"We have a choice?" laughed Father. Then he sobered. "No, it wasn't for incompetency. She was a good teacher. The way she tells it, they just fired her out of a clear sky. She asked for recommendations and one place wrote,

'Miss Carmody is a very competent teacher but we dare not recommend her for a teaching position.' "

" 'Dare not'?" asked Mother.

" 'Dare not,' " said Father. "The Agency assured me that they had investigated thoroughly and couldn't find any valid reasons for the dismissals, but she can't seem to find another job anywhere on the coast. She wrote me that she wanted to try another state."

"Do you suppose she's disfigured or deformed?" suggested Mother.

"Not from the neck up!" laughed Father. He took an envelope from his pocket. "Here's her application picture."

By this time I'd got the table cleared and I leaned over Father's shoulder.

"Gee!" I said. Father looked back at me, raising one eyebrow. I knew then that he had known all along that I was listening.

I flushed but stood my ground, knowing I was being granted admission to adult affairs, if only by the back door.

The girl in the picture was lovely. She couldn't have been many years older than I and she was twice as pretty. She had short dark hair curled all over her head and apparently that poreless creamy skin that seems to have an inner light of itself. She had a tentative look about her as though her dark eyebrows were horizontal question marks. There was a droop to the corners of her mouth—not much, just enough to make you wonder why . . . and want to comfort her.

"She'll stir the Canyon for sure," said Father.

"I don't know," Mother frowned thoughtfully. "What will the Old Ones say to a marriageable Outsider in the Canyon?"

"Adonday Veeah!" muttered Father. "That never occurred to me. None of our other teachers were ever of an age to worry about."

"What *would* happen?" I asked. "I mean if one of The Group married an Outsider?"

"Impossible," said Father, so like the Old Ones that I

could see why his name was approved in Meeting last spring.

"Why, there's even our Jemmy," worried Mother. "Already he's saying he'll have to start trying to find another Group. None of the girls here please him. Supposing this Outsider—how old is she?"

Father unfolded the application. "Twenty-three," he said, "Just three years out of college."

"Jemmy's twenty-four," said Mother, pinching her mouth together. "Father, I'm afraid you'll have to cancel the contract. If anything happened—Well, you waited overlong to become an Old One to my way of thinking and it'd be a shame to have something go wrong your first year."

"I can't cancel the contract. She's on her way here. School starts next Monday." Father ruffled his hair forward as he does when he's disturbed. "We're probably making a something of a nothing," he said hopefully.

"Well I only hope we don't have any trouble with this Outsider."

"Or she with *us*," grinned Father. "Where are my cigarettes?"

"On the bookcase," said Mother, getting up and folding the tablecloth together to hold the crumbs.

Father snapped his fingers and the cigarettes drifted in from the front room.

Mother went on out to the kitchen. The tablecloth shook itself over the waste basket and then followed her.

Father drove to Kerry Canyon Sunday night to pick up our new teacher. She was supposed to have arrived Saturday afternoon, but she didn't make bus connections at the County Seat. The road ends at Kerry Canyon. I mean for Outsiders. There's not much of the look of a well-traveled road very far out our way from Kerry Canyon, which is just as well. Tourists leave us alone. Of course we don't have much trouble getting our cars to and fro but that's why everything dead-ends at Kerry Canyon and we have to do all our own fetching and carrying—I mean the road being in the condition it is.

All the kids at our house wanted to stay up to see the

new teacher, so Mother let them; but by 7:30 the youngest ones began to drop off and by 9 there was only Jethro and 'Kiah, Lizbeth and Jemmy and me. Father should have been home long before and Mother was restless and uneasy. I knew if he didn't arrive soon, she would head for her room and the cedar box under the bed. But at 9:15, we heard the car coughing and sneezing up the draw. Mother's wide relieved smile was reflected on all our faces.

"Of course!" she cried. "I forgot. He has an Outsider in the car. He had to use the *road* and it's terrible across Jackass Flat."

I felt Miss Carmody before she came in the door. I was tingling all over from anticipation already, but all at once I felt her, so plainly that I knew with a feeling of fear and pride that I was of my Grandmother, that soon I would be bearing the burden and blessing of her Gift: the Gift that develops into free access to any mind—one of The People or Outsider—willing or not. And besides the access, the ability to counsel and help, to straighten tangled minds and snarled emotions.

And then Miss Carmody stood in the doorway, blinking a little against the light, muffled to the chin against the brisk fall air. A bright scarf hid her hair but her skin *was* that luminous matte-cream it had looked. She was smiling a little, but scared, too. I shut my eyes and . . . I went in—just like that. It was the first time I had ever sorted anybody. She was all fluttery with tiredness and strangeness and there was a question deep inside her that had the wornness of repetition, but I couldn't catch what it was. And under the uncertainty there was a sweetness and dearness and such a bewildered sorrow that I felt my eyes dampen. Then I looked at her again (sorting takes such a little time) as Father introduced her. I heard a gasp beside me and suddenly I went into Jemmy's mind with a stunning rush.

Jemmy and I have been close all our lives and we don't always need words to talk with one another, but this was the first time I had ever gone in like this and I knew he didn't know what had happened. I felt embarrassed and ashamed to know his emotion so starkly. I

closed him out as quickly as possible, but not before I knew that now Jemmy would never hunt for another Group; Old Ones or no Old Ones, he had found his love.

All this took less time than it takes to say "How do you do?" and shake hands. Mother descended with cries and drew Miss Carmody and Father out to the kitchen for coffee, and Jemmy swatted Jethro and made him carry the luggage instead of snapping it to Miss Carmody's room. After all, we didn't want to lose our teacher before she even saw the schoolhouse.

I waited until everyone was bedded down. Miss Carmody in her cold, cold bed, the rest of us of course with our sheets set for warmth—how I pity Outsiders! Then I went to Mother.

She met me in the dark hall and we clung together as she comforted me.

"Oh Mother," I whispered. "I sorted Miss Carmody tonight. I'm afraid."

Mother held me tight again. "I wondered," she said. "It's a great responsibility. You have to be so wise and clear-thinking. Your Grandmother carried the Gift with graciousness and honor. You are of her. You can do it."

"But Mother! To be an Old One!"

Mother laughed. "You have years of training ahead of you before you'll be an Old One. Counselor to the soul is a weighty job."

"Do I have to tell?" I pleaded. "I don't want anyone to know yet. I don't want to be set apart."

"I'll tell the Oldest," she said, "No one else need know." She hugged me again and I went back, comforted, to bed.

I lay in the darkness and let my mind clear, not even knowing how I knew how to. Like the gentle reachings of quiet fingers I felt the family about me. I felt warm and comfortable as though I were cupped in the hollow palm of a loving hand. Some day I would belong to the Group as I now belonged to the family. Belong to others? With an odd feeling of panic, I shut the family out. I wanted to be alone—to belong just to me and no one else. I didn't *want* the Gift.

I slept after a while.

Miss Carmody left for the schoolhouse an hour before we did. She wanted to get things started a little before school time, her late arrival making it kind of rough on her. 'Kiah, Jethro, Lizbeth, and I walked down the lane to the Armisters' to pick up their three kids. The sky was so blue you could taste it, a winey, fallish taste of harvest fields and falling leaves. We were all feeling full of bubbly enthusiasm for the beginning of school. We were light-hearted and light-footed, too, as we kicked along through the cottonwood leaves paving the lane with gold. In fact Jethro felt too light-footed, and the third time I hauled him down and made him walk on the ground, I cuffed him good. He was still sniffling when we got to Armisters'.

"She's pretty!" called Lizbeth before the kids got out to the gate, all agog and eager for news of the new teacher.

"She's young," added 'Kiah, elbowing herself ahead of Lizbeth.

"She's littler'n me," sniffed Jethro and we all laughed because he's five-six already even if he isn't twelve yet.

Debra and Rachel Armister linked arms with Lizbeth and scuffled down the lane, heads together, absorbing the details of teacher's hair, dress, nail polish, luggage, and night clothes, though goodness knows how Lizbeth knew anything about that.

Jethro and 'Kiah annexed Jeddy and they climbed up on the rail fence that parallels the lane and walked the top rail. Jehro took a tentative step or two above the rail, caught my eye and stepped back in a hurry. He knows as well as any child in the Canyon that a kid his age has no business lifting along a public road.

We detoured at the Mesa Road to pick up the Kroginold boys. More than once Father has sighed over the Kroginolds.

You see, when The Crossing was made, The People got separated in that last wild moment when air was screaming past and the heat was building up so alarmingly. The members of our Group left their ship just seconds before it crashed so devastatingly into the box canyon behind Old Baldy and literally splashed and drove itself into the canyon walls, starting a fire that stripped the

hills bare for miles. After The People gathered themselves together from the Life Slips and founded Cougar Canyon, they found that the alloy the ship was made of was a metal much wanted here. Our Group has lived on mining the box canyon ever since, though there's something complicated about marketing the stuff. It has to be shipped out of the country and shipped in again because everyone knows that it doesn't occur in this region.

Anyway, our Group at Cougar Canyon is probably the largest of the People, but we are reasonably sure that at least one Group and maybe two survived along with us. Grandmother in her time sensed two Groups but could never locate them exactly and, since our object is to go unnoticed in this new life, no real effort has ever been made to find them. Father can remember just a little of The Crossing, but some of the Old Ones are blind and crippled from the heat and the terrible effort they put forth to save the others from burning up like falling stars.

But getting back, Father often said that of all The People who could have made up our Group, we had to get the Kroginolds. They're rebels and were even before The Crossing. It's their kids that have been so rough on our teachers. The rest of us usually behave fairly decently and remember that we have to be careful around Outsiders.

Derek and Jake Kroginold were wrestling in a pile of leaves by the front gate when we got there. They didn't even hear us coming, so I leaned over and whacked the nearest rear-end and they turned in a flurry of leaves and grinned up at me for all the world like pictures of Pan in the mythology book at home.

"What kinda old bat we got this time?" asked Derek as he scrabbled in the leaves for his lunch box.

"She's not an old bat," I retorted, madder than need be because Derek annoys me so. "She's young and beautiful."

"Yeah, I'll bet!" Jake emptied the leaves from his cap onto the trio of squealing girls.

"She is so!" retorted 'Kiah. "The nicest teacher we ever had."

"She won't teach me nothing!" yelled Derek, lifting to the top of the cottonwood tree at the turnoff.

"Well, if she won't, I will," I muttered and, reaching for a handful of sun, I platted the twishers so quickly that Derek fell like a rock. He yelled like a catamount, thinking he'd get killed for sure, but I stopped him about a foot from the ground and then let go. Well, the stopping and the thump to the ground pretty well jarred the wind out of him, but he yelled:

"I'll tell the Old Ones! You ain't supposed to platt twishers—!"

"Tell the Old Ones," I snapped, kicking on down the leafy road "I'll be there and tell them why. And then, old smarty pants, what will be your excuse for lifting?"

And then I was ashamed. I was showing off as bad as a Kroginold—but they make me so mad!

Our last stop before school was at the Clarinades'. My heart always squeezed when I thought of the Clarinade twins. They just started school this year—two years behind the average Canyon kid. Mrs. Kroginold used to say that the two of them, Susie and Jerry, divided one brain between them before they were born. That's unkind and untrue—thoroughly a Kroginold remark—but it is true that by Canyon standards the twins were retarded. They lacked so many of the attributes of The People. Father said it might be a delayed effect of The Crossing that they would grow out of, or it might be advance notice of what our children will be like here—what is ahead for The People. It makes me shiver, wondering.

Susie and Jerry were waiting, clinging to one another's hand as they always were. They were shy and withdrawn, but both were radiant because of starting school. Jerry, who did almost all the talking for the two of them, answered our greetings with a shy "Hello."

Then Susie surprised us all by exclaiming, "We're going to school!"

"Isn't it wonderful?" I replied, gathering her cold little hand into mine. "And you're going to have the prettiest teacher we ever had."

But Susie had retired into blushing confusion and didn't didn't say another word all the way to school.

I was worried about Jake and Derek. They were walking apart from us, whispering, looking over at us and

laughing. They were cooking up some kind of mischief for Miss Carmody. And more than anything I wanted her to stay. I found right then that there *would* be years ahead of me before I became an Old One. I tried to go in to Derek and Jake to find out what was cooking, but try as I might I couldn't get past the sibilance of their snickers and the hard, flat brightness of their eyes.

We were turning off the road into the school yard when Jemmy, who should have been up at the mine long since, suddenly stepped out of the bushes in front of us, his hands behind him. He glared at Jake and Derek and then at the rest of the children.

"You kids mind your manners when you get to school," he snapped, scowling. "And you Kroginolds—just try anything funny and I'll lift you to Old Baldy and platt the twishers on you. This is one teacher we're going to keep."

Susie and Jerry clung together in speechless terror. The Kroginolds turned red and pushed out belligerent jaws. The rest of us just stared at a Jemmy who never raised his voice and never pushed his weight around.

"I mean it, Jake and Derek. You try getting out of line and the Old Ones will find a few answers they've been looking for—especially about the belfry in Kerry Canyon."

The Kroginolds exchanged looks of dismay and the girls sucked in breaths of astonishment. One of the most rigorously enforced rules of The Group concerns showing off outside the community. If Derek and Jake *had* been involved in ringing that bell all night last Fourth of July . . . well!

"Now you kids, scoot!" Jemmy jerked his head toward the schoolhouse, and the terrified twins scudded down the leaf-strewn path like a pair of bright leaves themselves, followed by the rest of the children with the Kroginolds looking sullenly back over their shoulders and muttering.

Jemmy ducked his head and scowled. "It's time they got civilized anyway. There's no sense to our losing teachers all the time."

"No," I said noncommittally.

"There's no point in scaring her to death," Jemmy was intent on the leaves he was kicking with one foot.

"No," I agreed, suppressing my smile.

Then Jemmy smiled ruefully in amusement at himself. "I shouldn't waste words with you," he said. "Here." He took his hands from behind him and thrust a bouquet of burning bright autumn leaves into my arms. "They're from you to her," he said. "Something pretty for the first day."

"Oh, Jemmy!" I cried, through the scarlet and crimson and gold. "They're beautiful. You've been up on Baldy this morning."

"That's right," he said. "But she won't know where they came from." And he was gone.

I hurried to catch up with the children before they got to the door. Suddenly overcome with shyness, they were milling around the porch steps, each trying to hide behind the others.

"Oh, for goodness' sakes!" I whispered to our kids. "You ate breakfast with her this morning. She won't bite. Go on in."

But I found myself shouldered to the front and leading the subdued group into the schoolroom. While I was giving the bouquet of leaves to Miss Carmody, the others, with the ease of established habit, slid into their usual seats, leaving only the twins, stricken and white, standing alone.

Miss Carmody, dropping the leaves on her desk, knelt quickly beside them, pried a hand of each gently free from their frenzied clutching and held them in hers.

"I'm so glad you came to school," she said in her warm, rich voice. "I need a first grade to make the school work out right and I have a seat that must have been built on purpose for twins."

And she led them over to the side of the room, close enough to the old pot-bellied stove for Outside comfort later and near enough to the window to see out. There, in dusted glory, stood one of the old double desks that The Group must have inherited from some ghost town out in the hills. There were two wooden boxes for footstools for small dangling feet and, spouting like a flame from the

old ink well hole, a spray of vivid red leaves—matchmates to those Jemmy had given me.

The twins slid into the desk, their hands again clutched together, and stared up at Miss Carmody, wide-eyed. She smiled back at them and, leaning forward, poked her finger tip into the deep dimple in each round chin.

"Buried smiles," she said, and the two scared faces lighted up briefly with wavery smiles. Then Miss Carmody turned to the rest of us.

I never did hear her introductory words. I was too busy mulling over the spray of leaves, and how she came to know the identical routine, words and all, that the twins' mother used to make them smile, and how on earth she knew about the old desks in the shed. But by the time we rose to salute the flag and sing our morning song, I had it figured out. Father must have briefed her on the way home last night. The twins were an ever present concern of the whole Group and we were all especially anxious to have their first year a successful one. Also, Father knew the smile routine and where the old desks were stored. As for the spray of leaves, well, some did grow this low on the mountain and frost is tricky at leaf-turning time.

So school was launched and went along smoothly. Miss Carmody was a good teacher and even the Kroginolds found their studies interesting.

They hadn't tried any tricks since Jemmy threatened them. That is, except that silly deal with the chalk. Miss Carmody was explaining something on the board and was groping sideways for the chalk to add to the lesson. Jake was deliberately lifting the chalk every time she almost had it. I was just ready to do something about it when Miss Carmody snapped her fingers with annoyance and grasped the chalk firmly. Jake caught my eye about then and shrank about six inches in girth and height. I didn't tell Jemmy, but Jake's fear that I might kept him straight for a long time.

The twins were really blossoming. They laughed and played with the rest of the kids and Jerry even went off occasionally with the other boys at noon time, coming

back as disheveled and wet as the others after a dam-building session in the creek.

Miss Carmody fitted so well into the community and was so well-liked by us kids that it began to look like we'd finally keep a teacher all year. Already she had withstood some of the shocks that had sent our other teachers screaming. For instance . . .

The first time Susie got a robin redbreast sticker on her bookmark for reading a whole page—six lines—perfectly, she lifted all the way back to her seat, literally walking about four inches in the air. I held my breath until she sat down and was caressing the glossy sticker with one finger, then I sneaked a cautious look at Miss Carmody. She was sitting very erect, her hands clutching both ends of her desk as though in the act of rising, a look of incredulous surprise on her face. Then she relaxed, shook her head and smiled, and busied herself with some papers.

I let my breath out cautiously. The last teacher but two went into hysterics when one of the girls absent-mindedly lifted back to her seat because her sore foot hurt. I had hoped Miss Carmody was tougher—and apparently she was.

The same week, one noon hour, Jethro came pelting up to the schoolhouse where Valancy—that's her first name and I call her by it when we are alone, after all she's only four years older than I—was helping me with the gruesome Tests and Measurements I was taking by extension from Teachers' College.

"Hey Karen!" he yelled through the window. "Can you come out a minute?"

"Why?" I yelled back, annoyed at the interruption just when I was trying to figure what was normal about a normal grade curve.

"There's need," yelled Jethro.

I put down my book. "I'm sorry, Valancy. I'll go see what's eating him."

"Should I come too?" she asked. "If something's wrong—"

"It's probably just some silly thing," I said, edging out fast. When one of The People says "There's need," that means Group business.

"Adonday Veeah!" I muttered at Jethro as we rattled down the steep rocky path to the creek. "What are you trying to do? Get us all in trouble? What's the matter?"

"Look," said Jethro, and there were the boys standing around an alarmed but proud Jerry, and above their heads, poised in the air over a half-built rock dam, was a huge boulder.

"Who lifted that?" I gasped.

"I did," volunteered Jerry, blushing crimson.

I turned on Jethro. "Well, why didn't you platt the twishers on it? You didn't have to come running—"

"On *that?*" Jethro squeaked. "You know very well we're not allowed to *lift* anything that big let alone platt it. Beside," shamefaced, "I can't remember that dern girl stuff."

"Oh Jethro! You're so stupid sometimes!" I turned to Jerry. "How on earth did you ever lift anything that big?"

He squirmed. "I watched Daddy at the mine once."

"Does he let you lift at home?" I asked severely.

"I don't know." Jerry squashed mud with one shoe, hanging his head. "I never lifted anything before."

"Well, you know better. You kids aren't allowed to lift anything an Outsider your age can't handle alone. And not even that if you can't platt it afterwards."

"I know it." Jerry was still torn between embarrassment and pride.

"Well, remember it," I said. And taking a handful of sun, I platted the twishers and set the boulder back on the hillside where it belonged.

Platting does come easier to the girls—sunshine platting, that is. Of course only the Old Ones do the sun-and-rain one and only the very Oldest of them all would dare the moonlight-and-dark that can move mountains. But that was still no excuse for Jethro to forget and run the risk of having Valancy see what she mustn't see.

It wasn't until I was almost back to the schoolhouse that it dawned on me. Jerry had lifted! Kids his age usually lift play stuff almost from the time they walk. That doesn't need platting because it's just a matter of a few inches and a few seconds so gravity manages the return. But Jerry and Susie never had. They were finally

beginning to catch up. Maybe it *was* just the Crossing that slowed them down—and maybe only the Clarinades. In my delight, I forgot and lifted to the school porch without benefit of the steps. But Valancy was putting up pictures on the high, old-fashioned moulding just below the ceiling, so no harm was done. She was flushed from her efforts and asked me to bring the step stool so she could finish them. I brought it and steadied it for her—and then nearly let her fall as I stared How had she hung those first four pictures before I got there?

The weather was unnaturally dry all Fall. We didn't mind it much because rain with an Outsider around is awfully messy. We have to let ourselves get wet. But when November came and went and Christmas was almost upon us, and there was practically no rain and no snow at all, we all began to get worried. The creek dropped to a trickle and then to scattered puddles and then went dry. Finally the Old Ones had to spend an evening at the Group Reservoir doing something about our dwindling water supply. They wanted to get rid of Valancy for the evening, just in case, so Jemmy volunteered to take her to Kerry to the show. I was still awake when they got home long after midnight. Since I began to develop the Gift, I have long periods of restlessness when it seems I have no apartness but am of every person in the Group. The training I should start soon will help me shut out the others except when I want them. The only thing is that we don't know who is to train me. Since Grandmother died there has been no Sorter in our Group and because of the Crossing, we have no books or records to help.

Anyway, I was awake and leaning on my window sill in the darkness. They stopped on the porch—Jemmy is bunking at the mine during his stint there. I didn't have to guess or use a Gift to read the pantomime before me. I closed my eyes and my mind as their shadows merged. Under their strong emotion, I could have had free access to their minds, but I had been watching them all Fall. I knew in a special way what passed between them, and I knew that Valancy often went to bed in tears and that Jemmy spent too many lonely hours on the Crag that juts

out over the canyon from high on Old Baldy, as though he were trying to make his heart as inaccessible to Outsiders as the Crag is. I knew what he felt, but oddly enough I had never been able to sort Valancy since the first night. There was something very un-Outsiderish and also very un-Groupish about her mind and I couldn't figure what.

I heard the front door open and close and Valancy's light steps fading down the hall and then I felt Jemmy calling me outside. I put my coat on over my robe and shivered down the hall. He was waiting by the porch steps, his face still and unhappy in the faint moonlight.

"She won't have me," he said flatly.

"Oh, Jemmy!" I cried. "You asked her—"

"Yes," he said. "She said no."

"I'm so sorry." I huddled down on the top step to cover my cold ankles. "But Jemmy—"

"Yes, I know!" He retorted savagely. "She's an Outsider. I have no business even to want her. Well, if she'd have me, I wouldn't hesitate a minute. This Purity-of-the-Group deal is—"

". . . is fine and right," I said softly, "as long as it doesn't touch you personally? But think for a minute, Jemmy. Would you be able to live life as an Outsider? Just think of the million and one restraints that you would have to impose on yourself—and for the rest of your life, too, or lose her after all. Maybe it's better to accept *No* now than to try to build something and ruin it completely later. And if there should be children . . ." I paused. "*Could* there be children, Jemmy?"

I heard him draw a sharp breath.

"We don't know," I went on. "We haven't had the occasion to find out. Do you want Valancy to be part of the first experiment?"

Jemmy slapped his hat viciously down on his thigh, then he laughed.

"You have the Gift," he said, though I had never told him. "Have you any idea, sister mine, how little you will be liked when you become an Old One?"

"Grandmother was well-liked," I answered placidly. Then I cried, "Don't *you* set me apart, darn you, Jemmy.

Isn't it enough to know that among a different people, *I* am different? Don't *you* desert me now!" I was almost in tears.

Jemmy dropped to the step beside me and thumped my shoulder in his old way. "Pull up your socks, Karen. We have to do what we have to do. I was just taking my mad out on you. What a world." He sighed heavily.

I huddled deeper in my coat, cold of soul.

"But the other one is gone," I whispered. "The Home."

And we sat there sharing the poignant sorrow that is a constant undercurrent among The People, even those of us who never actually saw The Home. Father says it's because of a sort of racial memory.

"But she didn't say no because she doesn't love me," Jemmy went on at last. "She does love me. She told me so."

"Then why not?" Sister-wise I couldn't imagine anyone turning Jemmy down.

Jemmy laughed—a short, unhappy laugh. "Because she is different."

"*She's* different?"

"That's what she said, as though it was pulled out of her. 'I can't marry,' she said. 'I'm different!' That's pretty good, isn't it, coming from an Outsider!"

"She doesn't know we're The People," I said. "She must feel that she is different from everyone. I wonder why?"

"I don't know. There's something about her, though. A kind of shield or wall that keeps us apart. I've never met anything like it in an Outsider or in one of The People either. Sometimes it's like meshing with one of us and then *bang!* I smash the daylights out of me against that stone wall."

"Yes, I know," I said. "I've felt it, too."

We listened to the silent past-midnight world and then Jemmy stood.

"Well, g'night, Karen. Be seeing you."

I stood up, too. "Good night, Jemmy." I watched him start off in the late moonlight. He turned at the gate, his face hidden in the shadows.

"But I'm not giving up," he said quietly. "Valancy is my love."

The next day was hushed and warm—unnaturally so for December in our hills. There was a kind of ominous stillness among the trees, and, threading thinly against the milky sky, the thin smokes of little brush fires pointed out the dryness of the whole country. If you looked closely you could see, piling behind Old Baldy, an odd bank of clouds, so nearly the color of the sky that it was hardly discernable, but puffy and summer-thunderheady.

All of us were restless in school, the kids reacting to the weather, Valancy pale and unhappy after last night. I was bruising my mind against the blank wall in hers, trying to find some way I could help her.

Finally the thousand and one little annoyances were climaxed by Jerry and Susie scuffling until Susie was pushed out of the desk onto an open box of wet water colors that Debra for heaven only knows what reason had left on the floor by her desk. Susie shrieked and Debra sputtered and Jerry started a high silly giggle of embarrassment and delight. Valancy, without looking, reached for something to rap for order with and knocked down the old cracked vase full of drooping wildflowers and three-day-old water. The vase broke and flooded her desk with the foul-smelling deluge, ruining the monthly report she had almost ready to send in to the County School Superintendent.

For a stricken moment there wasn't a sound in the room, then Valancy burst into half-hysterical laughter and the whole room rocked with her. We all rallied around doing what we could to clean up Susie and Valancy's desk and then Valancy declared a holiday and decided that it would be the perfect time to go up-canyon to the slopes of Baldy and gather what greenery we could find to decorate our school room for the holidays.

We all take our lunches to school, so we gathered them up and took along a square tarp the boys had brought to help build the dam in the creek. Now that the creek was dry, they couldn't use it and it'd come in handy to sit on

at lunch time and would serve to carry our greenery home in, too, stretcher-fashion.

Released from the schoolroom, we were all loud and jubilant and I nearly kinked my neck trying to keep all the kids in sight at once to nip in the bud any thoughtless lifting or other Group activity. The kids were all so wild, they might forget.

We went on up-canyon past the kids' dam and climbed the bare, dry waterfalls that stair-step up to the Mesa. On the Mesa, we spread the tarp and pooled our lunches to make it more picnicky. A sudden hush from across the tarp caught my attention. Debra, Rachel, and Lizbeth were staring horrified at Susie's lunch. She was calmly dumping out a half dozen *koomatka* beside her sandwiches.

Koomatka are almost the only plants that lasted through the Crossing. I think four *koomatka* survived in someone's personal effects. They were planted and cared for as tenderly as babies and now every household in the Group has a *koomatka* plant growing in some quiet spot out of casual sight. Their fruit is eaten not so much for nourishment as Earth knows nourishment, but as a last remembrance of all other similar delights that died with The Home. We always save *Koomatka* for special occasions. Susie must have sneaked some out when her mother wasn't looking. And there they were—across the table from an Outsider!

Before I could snap them to me or say anything, Valancy turned, too, and caught sight of the softly glowing bluey-green pile. Her eyes widened and one hand went out. She started to say something and then she dropped her eyes quickly and drew her hand back. She clasped her hands tightly together and the girls, eyes intent on her, scrambled the *koomatka* back into the sack and Lizbeth silently comforted Susie, who had just realized what she had done. She was on the verge of tears at having betrayed The People to an Outsider.

Just then 'Kiah and Derek rolled across the picnic table fighting over a cupcake. By the time we salvaged our lunch from under them and they had scraped the last of the chocolate frosting off their T-shirts, the *koomatka*

incident seemed closed. And yet, as we lay back resting a little to settle our stomachs, staring up at the smothery low-hanging clouds that had grown from the milky morning sky, I suddenly found myself trying to decide about Valancy's look when she saw the fruit. Surely it couldn't have been recognition!

At the end of our brief siesta, we carefully buried the remains of our lunch—the hill was much too dry to think of burning it—and started on again. After a while, the slope got steeper and the stubborn tangle of manzanita tore at our clothes and scratched our legs and grabbed at the rolled-up tarp until we all looked longingly at the free air above it. If Valancy hadn't been with us we could have lifted over the worst and saved all this trouble. But we blew and panted for a while and then struggled on.

After an hour or so, we worked out onto a rocky knoll that leaned against the slope of Baldy and made a tiny island in the sea of manzanita. We all stretched out gratefully on the crumbling granite outcropping, listening to our heart-beats slowing.

Then Jethro sat up and sniffed. Valancy and I alerted. A sudden puff of wind from the little side canyon brought the acrid pungency of burning brush to us. Jethro scrambled along the narrow ridge to the slope of Baldy and worked his way around out of sight into the canyon. He came scrambling back, half lifting, half running.

"Awful!" he panted. "It's awful! The whole canyon ahead is on fire and it's coming this way fast!"

Valancy gathered us together with a glance.

"Why didn't we see the smoke?" she asked tensely. "There wasn't any smoke when we left the schoolhouse."

"Can't see this slope from school," he said. "Fire could burn over a dozen slopes and we'd hardly see the smoke. This side of Baldy is a rim fencing in an awful mess of canyons."

"What'll we do?" quavered Lizbeth, hugging Susie to her.

Another gust of wind and smoke set us all to coughing and through my streaming tears, I saw a long lapping tongue of fire reach around the canyon wall.

Valancy and I looked at each other. I couldn't sort her

mind, but mine was a panic, beating itself against the fire and then against the terrible tangle of manzanita all around us. Bruising against the possibility of lifting out of danger, then against the fact that none of the kids was capable of sustained progressive self-lifting for more than a minute or so and how could we leave Valancy? I hid my face in my hands to shut out the acres and acres of tinder-dry manzanita that would blaze like a torch at the first touch of fire. If only it would rain! You can't *set* fire to wet manzanita, but after these long months of drought—!

I heard the younger children scream and looked up to see Valancy staring at me with an intensity that frightened me even as I saw fire standing bright and terrible behind her at the mouth of the canyon.

Jake, yelling hoarsely, broke from the group and lifted a yard or two over the manzanita before he tangled his feet and fell helpless into the ugly, angled branches.

"Get under the tarp!" Valancy's voice was a whip-lash. "All of you get under the tarp!"

"It won't do any good," bellowed 'Kiah. "It'll burn like paper!"

"Get—under—the—tarp!" Valancy's spaced, icy words drove us to unfolding the tarp and spreading it to creep under. I lifted (hoping even at this awful moment that Valancy wouldn't see me) over to Jake and yanked him back to his feet. I couldn't lift with him so I pushed and prodded and half-carried him back through the heavy surge of black smoke to the tarp and shoved him under. Valancy was standing, back to the fire, so changed and alien that I shut my eyes against her and started to crawl in with the other kids.

And then she began to speak. The rolling, terrible thunder of her voice shook my bones and I swallowed a scream. A surge of fear swept through our huddled group and shoved me back out from under the tarp.

Till I die, I'll never forget Valancy standing there tense and taller than life against the rolling convulsive clouds of smoke, both her hands outstretched, fingers wide apart as the measured terror of her voice went on and on in words that plague me because I should have known them and

didn't. As I watched, I felt an icy cold gather, a paralyzing, unearthly cold that froze the tears on my tensely upturned face.

And then lightning leaped from finger to finger of her lifted hands. And lightning answered in the clouds above her. With a toss of her hands she threw the cold, the lightning, the sullen shifting smoke upward, and the roar of the racing fire was drowned in a hissing roar of down-drenching rain.

I knelt there in the deluge, looking for an eternal second into her drained, despairing, hopeless eyes before I caught her just in time to keep her head from banging on the granite as she pitched forward, inert.

Then as I sat there cradling her head in my lap, shaking with cold and fear, with the terrified wailing of the kids behind me, I heard Father shout and saw him and Jemmy and Darcy Clarinade in the old pick-up, lifting over the steaming streaming manzanita, over the trackless mountainside through the rain to us. Father lowered the truck until one of the wheels brushed a branch and spun lazily, then the three of them lifted all of us up to the dear familiarity of that beat-up old jalopy.

Jemmy received Valancy's limp body into his arms and crouched in back, huddling her in his arms, for the moment hostile to the whole world that had brought his love to such a pass.

We kids clung to Father in an ecstasy of relief. He hugged us all tight to him, then he raised my face.

"Why did it rain?" he asked sternly, every inch an Old One while the cold downpour dripped off the ends of my hair and he stood dry inside his Shield.

"I don't know," I sobbed, blinking my streaming eyes against his sternness. "Valancy did it . . . with lightning . . . it was cold . . . she talked. . . ." Then I broke down completely, plumping down on the rough floor boards and, in spite of my age, howling right along with the other kids.

It was a silent, solemn group that gathered in the schoolhouse that evening. I sat at my desk with my hands folded stiffly in front of me, half scared of my own Peo-

ple. This was the first official meeting of the Old Ones I'd ever attended. They all sat in desks, too, except the Oldest who sat in Valancy's chair. Valancy sat stony-faced in the twin's desk, but her nervous fingers shredded one Kleenex after another as she waited.

The Oldest rapped the side of the desk with his cane and turned his sightless eyes from one to another of us.

"We're all here," he said, "to inquire—"

"Oh, stop it!" Valancy jumped up from her seat. "Can't you fire me without all this rigmarole? I'm used to it. Just say go and I'll go!" She stood trembling.

"Sit down, Miss Carmody," said the Oldest. And Valancy sat down meekly.

"Where were you born?" asked the Oldest quietly.

"What does it matter?" flared Valancy. Then resignedly, "It's in my application. Vista Mar, California."

"And your parents?"

"I don't know."

There was a stir in the room.

"Why not?"

"Oh, this is so unnecessary!" cried Valancy. "But if you *have* to know, both my parents were foundlings. They were found wandering in the streets after a big explosion and fire in Vista Mar. An old couple who lost everything in the fire took them in. When they grew up, they married. I was born. They died. Can I go now?"

A murmur swept the room.

"Why did you leave your other jobs?" asked Father.

Before Valancy could answer, the door was flung open and Jemmy stalked defiantly in.

"Go!" said the Oldest.

"Please," said Jemmy, deflating suddenly. "Let me stay. It concerns me too."

The Oldest fingered his cane and nodded. Jemmy half-smiled with relief and sat down in a back seat.

"Go on," said the Oldest One to Valancy.

"All right then," said Valancy. "I lost my first job because I—well—I guess you'd call it levitated—to fix a broken blind in my room. It was stuck and I just . . . went up . . . in the air until I unstuck it. The principal

saw me. He couldn't believe it and it scared him so he fired me." She paused expectantly.

The Old Ones looked at one another and my silly, confused mind began to add up columns that only my lack of common sense had kept from giving totals long ago.

"And the other one?" The Oldest leaned his cheek on his doubled-up hand as he bent forward.

Valancy was taken aback and she flushed in confusion.

"Well," she said hesitantly, "I called my books to me —I mean they were on my desk. . . ."

"We know what you mean," said The Oldest.

"You know!" Valancy looked dazed.

The Oldest stood up.

"Valancy Carmody, open your mind!"

Valancy stared at him and then burst into tears.

"I can't, I can't," she sobbed. "It's been too long. I can't let anyone in. I'm different. I'm alone. Can't you understand? They all died. I'm alien!"

"You are alien no longer," said the Oldest. "You are home now, Valancy." He motioned to me. "Karen, go in to her."

So I did. At first the wall was still there; then with a soundless cry, half anguish and half joy, the wall went down and I was with Valancy. I saw all the secrets that had cankered in her since her parents died—the parents who were of The People.

They had been reared by the old couple who were not only of The People but had been The Oldest of the whole Crossing.

I tasted with her the hidden frightening things—the need for living as an Outsider, the terrible need for concealing all her differences and suppressing all the extra Gifts of The People, the ever present fear of betraying herself and the awful lostness that came when she thought she was the last of The People.

Then suddenly *she* came in to *me* and my mind was flooded with a far greater presence than I had ever before experienced.

My eyes flew open and I saw all of the Old Ones staring at Valancy. Even the Oldest had his face turned to

her, wonder written as widely on his scarred face as on the others.

He bowed and made The Sign. "The lost persuasions and designs," he murmured. "She has them all."

And then I knew that Valancy, Valancy who had wrapped herself so tightly against the world to which any thoughtless act might betray her that she had lived with us all this time without our knowing about her or she about us, was one of us. Not only one of us but such a one as had not been since Grandmother died—and even beyond that. My incoherent thoughts cleared to one.

Now I would have someone to train me. Now I would become a sorter but only second to her.

I turned to share my wonder with Jemmy. He was looking at Valancy as The People must have looked at The Home in the last hour. Then he turned to the door.

Before I could draw a breath, Valancy was gone from me and from the Old Ones and Jemmy was turning to her outstretched hands.

Then I bolted for the outdoors and rushed like one possessed down the lane, lifting and running until I staggered up our porch steps and collapsed against Mother, who had heard me coming.

"Oh, Mother!" I cried. "She's one of us! She's Jemmy's love! She's wonderful!" And I burst into noisy sobs in the warm comfort of Mother's arms.

So now I don't have to go Outside to become a teacher. We have a permanent one. But I'm going anyway. I want to be as much like Valancy as I can and she has her degree. Besides I can use the discipline of living Outside for a year.

I have so much to learn and so much training to go through, but Valancy will always be there with me. I won't be set apart alone because of The Gift.

Maybe I shouldn't mention it, but one reason I want to hurry my training is that we're going to try to locate the other People. None of the boys here please me.

THESE ARE THE ARTS

by James H. Schmitz

"Now the Seven Deadly Arts are: Music, Literature, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Dancing, Acting. The Mercy of God has luckily purified these once pagan inventions, and transformed them into saving instruments of grace. Yet it behooves us to examine with the utmost diligence the possible sources of evil latent in each and every one of these arts. Then we shall consider some of the special forms of sin that may develop from them. St. Chrysostom warned the faithful . . ."

—the preacher, in Huneker's "Visionaries"

HUGH GROVER WAS SITTING IN THE TV ROOM of an old but spacious and luxuriously equipped bomb shelter located in a forested section of the rambling Grover estate. The shelter had been constructed by Hugh's grandfather sixty years earlier and, while never actually used as a place of refuge, had been kept in good condition by various members of the Grover family, who retained a strong touch of foresight and prudence in their habits even through the easygoing early decades of the Twenty-first Century. The entrance to the shelter was camouflaged, and only the Grover household and their intimates were informed of its existence and whereabouts.

Hugh, now a man of forty and the last living member of the family, looked very thoughtful and puzzled as he switched off the TV set and audiophil attachment and closed up a bull-roarer recording he had placed on the table beside him. He pushed away the tall mirror he had set up so he could watch the screen without looking at it directly, and climbed out of his chair. He had intended mirror and recording to be precautionary devices, but they had turned out to be superfluous. He had seen and heard nothing of the Galcom Craze.

It was possible that the World Government—wonder of wonders!—had heeded his warnings, or perhaps somebody else's, and banned the stuff completely. In the past few hours, Hugh had dialed every major station on earth. From none of them had the improbably beautiful face of a Galcom Teacher looked out at him; no Galcom symbol appeared suddenly in the screen. Nor had the audiophil programs produced any of those curious little cross-ripples of sound which were not openly connected with Galcom, but which Hugh had considered to be definitely one of its devices.

The absence of these items in itself was, of course, all to the good. But it seemed odd that, in addition, there hadn't been the slightest mention of Galcom during the hours Hugh listened and watched. He was the reverse of a TV addict, but he felt it improbable that what had started as the biggest TV Craze of recent years could simply have dropped from the public's interest again during the two weeks he was living in the bomb shelter. It seemed much more likely that the lack of reference to it was due to an official taboo.

He had predicted that the embittered settlers of Mars Territory would carry out a space attack on Earth after first softening up the population through the Galcom Craze. Did this deliberate lack of mention of the Craze suggest that certain elements of the danger still existed? Hugh Grover could think of no other reason for it.

He frowned, his finger moving toward a button to summon his secretary, Andy Britton, who shared the shelter with him and was at present asleep in another section. Then he checked himself. Andy made a good listener

when Hugh felt like airing his thoughts, but it might be better to ponder this curious situation by himself first.

It had been through Andy Britton that Hugh first learned of the Galcom Craze. They had come in by Atlantic rocket from the Jura Mountains that evening with a box of newly uncovered Bronze Age artifacts to add to Hugh's private museum. The Grover residence was on the fringes of the little village of Antoinette, three miles upriver from the bomb shelter, in the direction of the sizable town of South Valley. Hugh unpacked while Andy drove into Antoinette to buy dinner supplies. He came back laughing.

"A new advertising craze has started up," he said. "This one might interest you, Hugh!"

"Why should it?" Hugh asked.

"Symbols," Andy told him. "Primitive meditation brought up to date on TV! Practically every big station seems to be involved. They have overlapping Symbol Hours around the clock. You can't guess who's doing all this, so I'll tell you. It's the first representatives of the Galactic Community to reach the Solar System. How about that?"

Hugh grunted and asked him what he thought he was talking about. Galcom, it appeared, was short for Galactic Community. The representatives were inhumanly beautiful women or inhumanly handsome men. They were referred to as The Teachers. Their mission was to facilitate the adoption of Earth into the Community by instructing its inhabitants in a New Method of Thought and Communication, which would enable them to exchange ideas with other Galcom entities, and also one another, with the greatest of ease and speed. The New Method could be acquired by devoting a little study daily to the Galcom Symbols being presented on purchased TV time.

It was, of course, a promotion hoax of some sort. After the World Supreme Court established circa 1990 that to question publicly the truthfulness of statements made through an advertising medium was to act in restriction of trade, and hence illegal, the way had been open for the staging of truly colossal attention-getting tricks. Throughout his life, Hugh Grover had been vaguely aware of a

constant succession of TV Crazes of varying magnitude. When he thought of them at all, he concluded that in the comfortable world-wide suburbanity of the period people grew increasingly hungry for sensations of even the most idiotic variety. And since no corner of Earth was without its quota of TV sets, a really big Craze could command virtually universal attention. As a rule, they built up for a month or two, while the more sophisticated speculated on who was behind it this time and what actually was to be promoted, and the less sophisticated—time after time, apparently—took the gag at face value and very seriously. Andy reported that the smart money had begun to settle on Mars Territory as the Galcom sponsor within the first week and that the Craze was expected to resolve itself eventually as a renewed bid for Unlimited Free Water from Earth for the Territory.

"They seem to have hooked an unusual percentage of Believers this time," Andy said—Believers being, of course, the people who again had bought the gag. He had run into five or six persons in Antoinette who assured him with some excitement that the Galactic Community really existed, that this Craze was no Craze at all but a perfectly sincere and earnest attempt to help Earth raise itself to Galcom's lofty standards. Two of Andy's informants by now had achieved moments of direct mental communication with a Galcom Teacher, an experience described as enthralling and spiritually satisfying.

Hugh felt mildly disgusted as he not infrequently was with the ways of society in which he found himself. But since the study of symbolism and its use by primitive societies was in fact one of his most intensively cultivated hobbies, he was curious enough to turn on the TV set after dinner.

Immediately, he found himself face to face with one of the Galcom Teachers.

This one was female, and there could be no disputing the flawless and—figuratively, at least—the unearthly quality of her loveliness. Women irritated Hugh Grover as a rule, and he tended to avoid their company; but the Teacher's impact was not lost on him. He had been staring at her for almost twenty seconds before he discovered that

the melodious voice was repeating some of the things Andy had told him. The arts the station's viewers were being taught here, she said, were not designed to make them worthy of membership in the Galactic Community, as some appeared to have assumed. No—they were worthy indeed, and the intention was only to dissolve the barriers of linguistic difference, to do away with the awkwardness of spoken words which led so often and easily to misunderstandings. Words were not necessary when mind could speak to mind. And now, if the viewers would give their relaxed attention to the Galcom symbols they would be shown, they would find their minds begin to open out gently and softly . . . like beautiful flowers. . . .

In spite of this sweetly fluted lunacy, Hugh did not turn off the TV. He was still staring in fascination at the exquisite creature in the screen when she suddenly faded from view and he was looking instead at a Galcom symbol.

In almost the same instant, the screen went blank.

It took Hugh some seconds to realize that he himself had shut off the set. He was not in the least tempted to turn it on again. He had been badly startled. At the moment the symbol appeared, there had been a distinct sensation as if something were tugging at his thoughts . . . and then something else inside him went tight, closed up; and the sensation ended.

Once before, he'd had a very similar experience. A psychiatrist had attempted to hypnotize him; and while Hugh, consciously, had been completely willing to let it happen, the attempt ended in absolute failure. At that time, too, there had been, as Hugh floated along mentally, his attention only half on the medical man's words, a sudden awareness of shutting off their effect and remaining closed to it, of having become impenetrable now and secure. And there was nothing that Hugh—consciously again—could do about it. He could not be hypnotized.

And what could that mean here? Brief as his glimpse of the Galcom symbol had been, he could recall it distinctly —a pale-blue, glowing, rather intricate design of markings which reminded Hugh of nothing so much as some of the ideographic characters used in the written Chinese language of past centuries. In itself, there was nothing sinister

or alarming about its appearance. But Hugh could remember very vividly the feeling of something pulling at his thoughts. . . .

Hugh Grover continued to sit before the dead set for a while, becoming increasingly disturbed. At last, he got up and put a call through to the home of an acquaintance in the East who was an advertising executive.

The acquaintance confirmed Andy Britton's report on the Galcom Craze. It was a big thing, a very big thing. After only a few days, it was beginning to edge into the top popularity spot. In his opinion, it was likely to develop into the most successful TV spectacular of the past twenty years. Yes, Mars Territory definitely was backing it. The acquaintance couldn't yet see just how the Territory planned to tie in its perennial demand for Earth water, but that certainly would turn out to be the angle. Hugh presumably had become interested in the program because of its use of symbols? One heard that there appeared to be a very deft adaptation of neo-Jungian techniques involved. What was Hugh's opinion?

Hugh replied cautiously that he hadn't yet seen a Galcom program, but that it seemed possible. What effect did the symbols produce on the viewers?

"They're euphoric," the acquaintance said. It was difficult to be more specific because of wide variations in individual response. It was a really remarkable approach, a unique accomplishment. Yes, he understood there'd been negative reactions but in such an insignificant number that they could not affect the progress of the Craze in any way . . . Oh, perhaps point five per cent. There were always cranks and alarmists who objected to genuine innovations in the programs.

After Hugh hung up, he did some more intensive thinking. He was now thoroughly concerned, but there were reasons to be cautious about any action he took. Officially, he could be fitted very well into his acquaintance's classification of cranks and alarmists. He was known to be a wealthy eccentric—wealthy enough to get away with a degree of eccentricity which a man of moderate means could hardly have afforded. He was an amateur scientist. Even his friends regarded his preoccupation with things of the

past, things of the mind, as somewhat morbid. And there had been a period ten years before, after an ill-fated attempt at marriage, when he suffered a quite serious nervous breakdown and required extensive psychiatric treatment.

He had developed a considerable degree of self-awareness over the years. He knew that his interests and studies reflected his mental organization . . . an organization in which conscious and unconscious processes which in most men were kept much more neatly distinct tended to merge to an uncomfortable degree. He knew also that he had, in consequence, developed defensive reactions which the ordinary person simply did not have, and ordinarily had no need for. He could not be hypnotized. Drugs which were supposed to reduce resistance to hypnosis merely raised his own level. And he could not be affected by the Galcom symbols. But neither of those things would be true for the vast majority of Earth's population.

He had made a careful study of the connections between specific sensory impressions and mental effects. Form, color, motion—these things held unique meanings for the unconcious mind and aroused responses of which the conscious man might not be in the least aware.

His mind had produced an instantaneous, violent reaction to his first glimpse of a Galcom symbol. It had sealed itself away from something it regarded as a very dangerous threat.

What would the same impression be doing to the mind of the average man, which had never needed to learn such stringent measures of defense?

In Hugh Grover's opinion, it could plunge the possessor of that mind—after not too many encounters—into a state of psychotic helplessness.

And who would be interested in doing such a thing to the people of Earth?

Precisely Mars Territory, of course.

He had been on Mars some years before. Except for World Government officials, whose duties held them there, not many Earth citizens visited the Territory. It held no attractions for tourists. Hugh Grover's interest

was drawn by reports that excavations had begun again in some of the ruins of the aboriginal Martian culture scattered sparsely about the Territory. Earlier archeological efforts had produced insignificant results: the ruins were over a quarter of a million years old and usually buried, and there was no evidence that the native race had advanced beyond the level of walled villages before it died out. But Hugh decided he would like to visit some of the new digs in person.

It had been a frustrating experience which gave him a very different picture of the Territorial settlers and in particular of their ruling group than he had obtained on Earth. They were a hard, sullen breed of men, rulers of a barren empire with the potential of a great industrial development—a development still stalled by Earth's refusal to supply Mars Territory with the required amounts of water. Hugh thought he understood the reason for that. Martian technology, spurred by necessity, was at least on a par with Earth's. Given unlimited water it would forge ahead. And once it was sufficiently ahead, complacent suburban Earth would be virtually at the mercy of a society which had learned again to fight and work relentlessly for what it wanted. It was hardly surprising that the World Government was reluctant to go to enormous expense to help bring such a situation about.

But it made Earth's citizens very unpopular on Mars. Hugh's attempts to obtain permission to visit the ruins of the prehistoric culture continued to run into unaccountable difficulties and delays, and the local Earth officials at last advised him quietly to give the matter up. If he did succeed in getting into the Territorial backlands, they could not be responsible for his safety there.

At the time, Hugh had thought he was confronting simple malice. But there was another explanation. If an aboriginal symbol science had existed on Mars in the distant past, Territorial scientists might have been studying its principles in order to learn how to adapt them to produce effects on the human mind. In other words, the tools of the Galcom Craze were being prepared . . . and, naturally, an Earthman would not have been a welcome visitor. It was quite likely, Hugh decided, that he wouldn't

have gotten out of Mars Territory alive if he had been too persistent in his efforts.

One could conclude further that Mars Territory was now at war with Earth.

The Galcom symbols would—in the opinion of the Territorials, at least—determine the issue. The derangement of the mental structure of the great majority of Earth's population could be far advanced before any outer evidence of general psychosis appeared. Then the Territorial space attack would be launched.

Mars Territory, Hugh thought, was making a mistake. Earth's material advantages would still be too great for them and in the end Earth would win out. But for the private citizens who retained their sanity, the interim period would be extremely unpleasant and dangerous.

Partway through his reflections, he had pressed the audiophil button on the TV set without giving the action much consideration, and the familiar muted flows of classical music were accompanying his thoughts. Now, suddenly, he sat bolt upright. There had been a subtle intrusion in the music, an odd, quick, light, up-and-down rippling, like the crossing of two threads of sound, which was not a proper part of the piece to which he was listening.

Almost with that thought came an internal reaction very similar to what Hugh experienced at his glimpse of the Galcom symbol—a sense of something pulling, tugging gently at his mind, a dreamlike distortion; then the quick, solid block of mental resistance which shut the feeling off. Hugh reached out hastily and turned off the audiophil.

So they were not limited to visual channels in their attack on Earth's minds! Men like himself who ignored TV presentations could still be approached along other routes.

That decided him. This was no speculation but quite real, quite serious personal danger. He realized now that he had been getting sleepy for the past few minutes—and he could not be sure he had not heard that curious cross-ripple of sound several times before it penetrated into his awareness. When the attack was insidious enough, his

subconscious watchdogs might be much less dependable than he had believed.

The important thing then was to look out for himself. Hugh was aware that he had no overwhelming or all-inclusive fondness for his fellow men; on the whole, they were there, and he could tolerate them. A few, like Andy Britton, he rather liked, when they weren't being irritating. Nevertheless, his decision now to take Andy to the old Grover bomb shelter with him was due primarily to the fact that Andy was a very capable young man whose assistance during the possibly trying period ahead might be invaluable.

As for the others, he would try to warn them in time to avert or modify the approaching disaster; but it would have to be done in a manner which could not affect his own safety. Though Mars Territory looked like the responsible agent for what was happening, it must have allies on Earth in positions where they could deal with interference . . . and with those who interfered. Hugh spent an hour outlining his conclusions about the Galcom Craze in every detail. He then made approximately fifty copies of the message and addressed them to various members of the government, to news agencies, and to a number of important people whose background indicated that they might give serious thought to such a warning. He was careful to mention nothing that could serve to identify him and left the messages unsigned. Andy Britton was dispatched to South Valley to drop them into the mailing system there. After the secretary returned, Hugh told him what he believed was occurring and what his plans were.

Andy kept his face carefully expressionless, but it was plain what his own theory was—old Hugh had cracked up at last. However, he had a highly paid job, and if Hugh wanted them to sit out the next few weeks in a bomb shelter, that would clearly be all right with Andy Britton. Before dawn, all preparations had been made. They closed up the town house in Antoinette again, and installed themselves unobtrusively in the forest shelter down the river.

The next two weeks passed—to all appearances—uneventfully. Andy Britton dutifully avoided the shelter's

TV room, and he and Hugh took turns observing the air traffic above the river and the road gliders passing along the highway from the shelter lookout panel. There were no signs of disturbance of any kind. Andy, an active individual by nature, began to show some degree of restiveness but made no attempts to argue Hugh out of his ideas.

Hugh saw no reason to rush matters. For the time being, he had secured himself from the Galcom attack, both as to possible personal effects and the dangers that could arise from a demented populace. His warning might or might not be heeded. Others might see the threat and take steps to end it. Whatever was to occur, he had withdrawn to a position where he could wait events out with the greatest degree of safety.

He began to give his attention to methods whereby he could—without exposing himself—regain a more complete contact with the outer world than simple observation from the shelter provided. Out of this came eventually the arrangement in the TV room with the mirror and the bull-roarer recording. The Galcom symbols, judging from the sample he had seen, were asymmetrical designs. If the specific visual image produced by them brought about some effect on the mind, the effect should be nullified by a reversal of the image. Hence the mirror through which he could observe the TV screen without looking directly at it. He was cancelling out the Gorgon's head. The bull-roarer recording was to smother Galcom's audible form of attack, the drowsiness-producing cross-ripplings of light sound. The switch which started the recording would be in Hugh's left hand whenever he turned on the set, his thumb pressed down on its release. At any loss of alertness, he would let go automatically. The election of a bull-roarer with its own ritual implications hadn't been necessary for this purpose; but the notion pleased Hugh and—the subconscious being the suggestible and superstitious entity it was—a little deliberate countermagic should strengthen the effect of sheer noise.

In spite of these supporting devices, Hugh had intended to proceed very prudently with his investigation. He couldn't be sure they would actually give him more

protection than his own resources could provide. He hadn't forgotten the disconcerting feeling of having been caught off guard by a barely perceptible sound pattern, and there might, after all, be more Galcom tricks than the two he had encountered. The lack of anything in the least abnormal then in the TV programs he scanned through was rather disconcerting in itself. Something, obviously, *had* happened—must have happened. The Galcom program hadn't vanished without cause.

The appearance of it was that Galcom had been banned from the networks by World Government edict. The entire business of symbol trickery and its effects might have been turned over meanwhile to some scientific group for orderly investigation. Mars Territory could have been put under an embargo. And it was conceivable that Territorial raiders were known or suspected to be in space; and that while the Earth fleets hunted for them, the whole affair was being toned down deliberately in the networks to avoid a panic. There was, after all, no effective way of protecting the population from space attack except by stopping a raider before he got too close.

The appearance of it then was a little mystifying, not necessarily alarming. It concurred with the undisturbed look of the countryside traffic outside the shelter.

But those reflections did not at all change Hugh's feeling about the situation. The feeling told him with increasing clarity that there was some hidden menace in the lack of mention about Galcom. That the silence covered a waiting trap. And that specifically he—Hugh Grover—was being threatened.

He could acknowledge that, theoretically, that presented the picture of a paranoid personality. But the hunch was too strong to be ignored. He didn't intend to ignore it. He could lose nothing—except for strengthening Andy's notions about his loss of mental competence, which was hardly important—by acting on the assumption that the hunch was correct. If it was correct, if there was a trap waiting outside, the trap could be sprung. Not by him, but by Andy Britton.

Hugh rubbed his chin thoughtfully. There was another place in the northern Andes which could be turned into

at least as secure a hide-out as Grandfather Grover's bomb shelter. In some respects—the nearest neighbors would be many miles away—it should be a more dependable one. He could get there overnight with one of the pair of jet rigs hanging in the shelter storeroom. For the sake of obtaining definite information, which would either confirm or disprove his suspicions, he could, therefore, risk losing the bomb shelter.

And he could—though he hoped nothing would happen to Andy—risk losing Andy.

Andy Britton was in the kitchen section, having breakfast. He looked up rather blearily when Hugh came in. His red hair was still uncombed and he had obviously just come awake.

"Mind coming along to the TV room a moment?" Hugh asked. "I've found something, but I'm not quite sure what it means."

"What have you found?"

"I'd sooner let you see for yourself."

In the TV room, Andy looked at the mirror and recording with controlled distaste, asked, "Want me to use those?"

"It can't do any harm," Hugh said. "Here—I'll hold the switch for the bull-roarer myself. Now go ahead."

Andy studied his face quizzically, then turned on the TV set and clicked in a station at random. He watched the screen through the mirror, looked over at Hugh again.

"Try another one," Hugh suggested.

Ten minutes later, Andy, face very thoughtful, switched off the set, asked, "Same thing everywhere?"

"I've been going down through the list these last three hours," Hugh said. "I don't believe I missed a station of any significance. I didn't hear a word about the Galcom Craze. Odd, isn't it?"

Andy agreed it was very odd indeed.

"What do you make of it?" Hugh asked.

Andy's lips quirked. "Isn't it obvious? Everyone in the world—except you and I, of course—has learned by now how to communicate with the alien races of the Galactic Community. Last Monday, the Solar System was el-

evated to full membership. Why keep the thing going after that?" He pondered a moment, added, "I owe you an apology, of course, Hugh."

"Why?"

"I thought you were tottering, and I guess I showed it. Now it looks as if you were right. Something stopped the Craze in midswing. And only our good old paternal World Government could have done it."

"The Craze couldn't have simply run itself out . . . naturally?"

Andy shook his head. "I followed a lot of them when I was still young and foolish. That Galcom deal was good for another six weeks. It didn't run out naturally. It was stopped. And unless there was something *mighty* wrong about those symbols—just like you said—it wouldn't have been stopped." He grinned suddenly, his face lightening. "Know something? When we walk out of here now—when they find out who it was that shot off those warning messages all over the world two weeks ago—I'll be a hero's secretary!"

Hugh hesitated, said, "I'm not so sure about that, Andy."

"Huh?" The grin faded from Andy's face, was replaced by a cautious "Now what?" expression. He asked, "What do you mean, Hugh?"

Hugh said, "I don't want to seem unduly apprehensive." He indicated the TV screen. "But what we saw there does suggest something like a conspiracy to me."

"A conspiracy?"

"Exactly. I told you I was sittting here for three hours checking through the various stations. Why in all that time did no one even mention the late Galcom Craze?"

"I wouldn't know," Andy said with a trace of exasperation. "But the obvious way to find out is to get out of here and start asking questions. We can't spend the rest of our lives lurking in a bomb shelter, Hugh."

Hugh smiled. "I don't intend to, believe me. But I do think we should be a little careful about asking questions." He considered, went on, "As a first step, let's wheel out the flitter and look things over from the air for a while."

Andy said with strained patience, "That isn't going to tell us what happened to the Galcom Craze. Now suppose I put the midget road glider in the back of the flitter and—"

"Why not?" Hugh looked at his watch. "It'll be getting dark in a few hours. If it seems safe to let you do a little reconnoitering on foot around South Valley, that would be the time to start out."

Shortly after sunset, Hugh brought the flitter down to a quiet stretch of the road leading from Antoinette to South Valley. Andy swung the glider out of the flitter's rear compartment, straightened it, and climbed into the saddle. He grinned at Hugh, said, "I'll be careful . . . don't worry! See you at the bomb shelter early in the morning."

Hugh nodded. "I'll wait for you inside."

He watched the road glider disappear around the bend toward South Valley, and took the flitter up again. From the air, nothing out of the ordinary appeared to have occurred, or to be occurring, in the South Valley district. In Antoinette and the other towns and villages over which they had passed, people plainly were going about their everyday activities with no suggestion of an emergency or of disturbances. But Hugh did not intend to change any part of his plans. His instincts still smelled a trap.

By nightfall, he had locked each section of the bomb shelter individually, then left it, locking the camouflaged entrance behind him. Carrying one of the jet rigs and a knapsack of camping equipment, and with a heavy automatic pistol fastened to his belt, he moved uphill through the trees surrounding the shelter until he reached a point some three hundred yards away from where he could watch both the approaches from the river road half a mile below and the air above the forest. Here he took out a pair of powerful night glasses, laid his other equipment beside a tree, and settled down to wait.

If Andy showed up unaccompanied in the morning, he would be there to receive him and find out what had happened during the past two weeks. But if Andy did not come alone, or if the shelter was approached by others in the interval, Hugh would vanish quietly among the big

trees behind him. Once over the crest of the hill, he would be in the thick timber of a government preserve. He was an expert outdoorsman and felt no concern about his ability to remain out of sight there. Before the next morning, the jet rig would have carried him to his new retreat while any searchers would still be engaged in attempting to open the last locked sections of the bomb shelter where he was supposed to be.

Any searchers. . . . Hugh admitted to himself that he could find no rational answer to the question of who should be searching for him or what their purpose might be. His hunch didn't tell him that. What it told him was to stay ready to run if he wanted to survive.

He intended to do just that.

Andy Britton appeared riding the road glider along the route from Antoinette around nine in the morning. Hugh watched him approach through the glasses. Nothing had happened during the night. Near morning, when he began to feel traces of drowsiness, he had taken wake-up pills and come alert again.

The glider could not be used in the rough natural terrain of the estate grounds. Hugh saw Andy bring it to a stop near the edge of the estate, push it out of sight among some bushes and start up toward the shelter. They had agreed that he should come on foot, rather than have Hugh bring the flitter down to the road to pick him up. Hugh remained where he was, continuing to scan the sky, the road in both directions and the woods below him as Andy came climbing higher, disappearing for minutes at a time among the trees, then emerging into open ground again.

There was no one with him, following him, or watching him from the air. Hugh stood up finally, settled knapsack and jet rig over his shoulders, and started downhill toward the shelter, still careful to remain out of sight himself.

He was standing concealed among the bushes above the shelter entrance when Andy appeared directly below him.

"Up here, Andy!" Hugh said.

Andy stopped in his tracks, stood peering about, as if in bewilderment.

Hugh repeated, "Up here. Right above you . . . see me? That's right. Now come on up."

Watching the secretary scramble awkwardly through the shrubbery toward him, Hugh felt a sharp thrill of renewed apprehension, for Andy was stumbling like a man who was either drunk or on the very edge of exhaustion. Then, as he came closer, Hugh could see that his face was pale and drawn. A dazed face, Hugh told himself . . . a shocked face. Caution!

He said sharply, the sense of danger pounding through him, "That's close enough to talk! Stop there."

Andy stopped obediently twelve feet away, stood staring at Hugh, then at the knapsack and jet rig Hugh had let slide to the ground, and at the pistol belted to Hugh's side. A look of growing comprehension came into his face.

"Yes," Hugh said coldly, "I'm ready to move out if necessary. Is it?"

Andy seemed to be struggling for words. Then he said, his voice thick and harsh, "I don't think that will do any good, Hugh. You were wrong, you know."

"About what?"

"Mars Territory. They weren't behind the Galcom Craze. . . ." His voice faltered.

"Go ahead. Then who was behind it?"

"Hugh, don't you see? The Galcom Teachers *were* aliens. They took over Mars Territory two months ago, before they ever showed up on Earth."

Staring at Andy's sweating, anguished face, Hugh felt a dryness come into his throat. He asked, "Are you trying to tell me there is such a thing as the Galactic Community—that those Teachers were its missionaries, just as they claimed to be?"

Andy shook his head. "No. It's worse than that. It's a lot worse than that. You were right about the symbols. They were doing things to people's minds through them. But it wasn't to teach us how to communicate with others. It's almost the other way around."

"The other . . . try to make sense, Andy!"

"I'm trying to. Those Teachers are the servants or slaves of another race. They were sent here because they can be made to look and sound like humans. The others are telepaths and the way they handle their servants is by telepathic orders. They're in control of whole planets, whole races. They couldn't ordinarily have got control of Earth because there were hardly any human beings with enough telepathic sensitivity to receive their orders and respond to them. So that's what was to be done through the Galcom Craze and the symbols . . . soften us up mentally to the point where we could understand the master race's orders."

"And it succeeded?"

"Of course, it succeeded. They're already here. They arrived on Earth almost a week ago."

"Then why . . . ?"

"Why does everything look so peaceful?" Andy asked bitterly. "Why shouldn't it? When they give a human an order, the human obeys. He can't help it. They don't want our economy to break down. They don't want panics and anarchy. This is a valuable planet and their property. Everybody's been told to keep on with their regular activities, just as if nothing had happened. So that's exactly what they do.

"But they can *tell* you what's happened if you start asking them questions. Oh, Lord, can they tell you about it!" Andy's face wrinkled up and tears ran down his cheeks. "They've started taking people away in their ships now. Our surplus population, they say. Nobody knows what happens to. . . ."

Hugh said, shocked, "But they couldn't have got control of everybody. Not so easily! Not so fast!"

"No, not everybody. There were the people like ourselves who just hadn't watched the programs. And what they call 'immunes'—anyone who doesn't react to a telepathic command and won't respond to conditioning. What's the difference? There weren't enough of either. The immunes are being rounded up and killed. The others get the treatment."

Take Andy or leave him? Andy could still be very useful. . . .

"Andy," he said, "we'll have to act quickly. If we stay here until they get everything organized, we won't be able to move without being spotted. Here are the shelter keys . . . catch them! That's right. Now get in there and get out your jet rig. We'll lock up the shelter and leave at once."

Andy nodded. "And then, Hugh?"

"There's another place I know of. Down south, up in the mountains. Nobody else around for miles. . . . We'll be safe there a long time. It's stocked up for years." Hugh bent for knapsack and rig, added, "After we get there, we'll see. It's quite probable that I'm an immune myself. We may locate others. I . . ."

There was a sudden noise behind him. Hugh turned sharply. Andy stood four feet away, the small gun in his hand pointing straight at Hugh's head.

"You *are* an immune, Hugh," he said, chokingly. "But I'm not—I'm not!"

The tears poured down his face as he pulled the trigger.

Telepathy is manifested in many different ways. The famous Dutch telepath, M. Gerard Croiset, solves murder mysteries for the police best if someone connected with the murder is an orphan—perhaps because he was one himself. Others pick up words. Some, like Gladys V. Jones, author of The Flowering Tree, *"see" symbols.*

Ghan, the hero of this story, saw such symbols. They convinced him of the hopeless fear that dominated the civilization he was investigating—and then showed him its potential for salvation.

THE GARDEN IN THE FOREST

by Robert F. Young

FROM: Administrator of Alien Cultures
Stellar Headquarters
Sosterich III

TO: Ghan, Supreme Arbiter
Parapsychology Center
Sosterich IV

GENERAL: The Office of Perimeter Research reports that the culture in Star Group 206 has entered Phase Nine.

Phase Nine cultures have a fear base, are unstable, and are usually immune to regenerative stimulus. (Ref.: THEORETICAL EVOLUTIONARY PATTERNS, Official Version, I. S. Library.)

SPECIFIC: It is the carefully considered decision of the Office of Perimeter Research that the culture in question constitutes a menace to Galactic Security. Therefore, the only logical recourse is immediate extirpation. However, since no culture beyond Phase Eight has ever been known to exist, such procedure will be unprecedented and will require the authorization of the Supreme Arbiter.

REQUEST: That the Supreme Arbiter personally check the culture in question and forward his report to this headquarters, with authorization appended if his decision coincides with the decision reached by the Office of Perimeter Research, or with recommendation as to alternate course of action if it does not.

QUADRI-DIMENSIONAL SPATIAL WARPS involve neither subjective nor objective temporal distortion. Ghan's transition not only seemed instantaneous; it was instantaneous.

Since the type of investigation he intended to make usually obtained the most relevant results when conducted along unpremeditated lines, he had chosen his base at random. He was neither surprised nor chagrined, then, when he materialized in a snow covered field. If anything, he was mildly pleased to have struck a zone with a climate that was reminiscent of summer on Sosterich IV.

A small group of buildings showed against a blue backdrop of afternoon sky, and he set off across the fields toward them. The terrain presented little of interest: a few isolated stands of timber, an eroded hill or two. Presently he came to a winding road and since it afforded a more comfortable base for ambulation he chose it in preference to the more direct route. He could have teleported of course, but on a mission of this sort it was better to be circumspect, at least until initial orientation had been completed.

The group of buildings resolved into a dominant red structure, a much smaller white structure, and several odd nondescript structures. Ghan identified them tentatively with their word equivalents, drawing from one of the languages he had assimilated just before his departure: a barn, a house, a coop or sty of some sort, a—

He had no word for the small skeletal structure in the immediate foreground. It was an elaborate framework of some kind and it was overrun with tangled thorny vines. It stood in an area of small oval hummocks and geometric pathways. It appealed to him instantly as a practical base for his operations. The fact that it would afford him no protection from the weather was immaterial.

He stepped inside and found a bench and a small table. He placed his portable transmitter on the table and he sat down on the bench His headquarters was complete.

Before intensifying his 'pathic field he made a cursory probe of the adjacent buildings. All contained sentient life but the house contained the only type he was concerned with. He did not pause to examine it, however. It was more important, first, to ascertain whether he was centralized in an area that contained sufficient specimens to make a cross-section analysis valid.

He began intensifying.

The process was not enervating. A 'path of Ghan's ability could intensify for almost unlimited periods of time without harmful aftereffects. But in order to attain the degree of concentration required, external physical awareness had to be sacrificed.

His field expanded in concentric waves. At first he touched sentient life only in scattered sequence, then in progressively heavier sequence, finally *en masse*. He focused.

A city. Complex, tiered, overcrowded. A plethoric jungle of thought patterns confronted him and he selected one at random for an experimental trans-probe.

In the Sosterich home system, and to a lesser degree in the scattered Sosterich satrapies, telepathy was a highly specialized art. It was thought-reading *combined* with analysis *plus* symbolical interpretation. The process was instantaneous. When Ghan probed a subject he partici-

pated in a dramatic representation of that subject's character.

His first subject was a man. The dominant symbol was a forest. It was a melancholic forest, overgrown, tangled, gloomy. The man was walking along a vaguely defined trail, pausing often to glance back over his shoulder. All he ever saw was an impassive arabesque of vines and foliage, yet he knew without doubt that he was being followed.

The trail led somewhere, but the man did not know where. The man hated the forest. He hated the scabrous trees with their hungry leaves that devoured the sunlight, leaving him only a pale pittance to illumine his way along the trail. He wanted to turn and retrace his steps, but he was afraid. He was sure that way back on the trail there had been a clearing, a clearing filled with warm sunlight. All he wanted was to find it again, but he knew he could never find it unless he went back. All he could do was to keep stumbling ahead, hoping that the trail did not follow a relentless straight line, hoping that it curved in a wide circle back to the clearing, and if it did, if he found the warm safe place where the sun reached, he promised himself he would stay there forever—

Ghan disconnected. A moment ago he had been of the opinion that the Office of Perimeter Research had been precipitate in its judgment. It had been difficult to accept a Phase Nine culture as being anything more than theoretical.

It was difficult no longer.

Grimly, he sought another subject. But for some reason he had trouble concentrating. A discordant thought kept intruding, disturbing his focus. It was a strange wondering thought and it emanated from a source that was distant and yet close by. Annoyed, he decreased the intensity of his field to minimum. The thought came through clearly then: *Who are you?*

A small female of the species was standing just outside the entrance of his headquarters. Ghan became aware of two enormous blue eyes. For some time he was aware of nothing else. Eyes in Sosterich society were usually taken for granted; they were efficient organs that performed

their intended function and that was all they were. They were of various colors, of course: often they were green, sometimes they were yellow, and once in a while they were brown.

But they were never blue.

Presently he saw that these eyes were part of a round white face framed with pale yellow hair. The thought came again and this time he saw the movement of the lips and heard the sound that accompanied it.

"Who are you?"

I am Ghan, he 'pathed.

"Ghan? What a funny name! But what are you doing in my mother's summerhouse?"

It was an unanticipated question arising from an unanticipated situation. Ghan was angry with himself. He prided himself on his efficiency almost as much as he did on his objectivity, but for once he had forgotten something.

But "overlooked" would have been a kinder word. After all, he was investigating a Phase Nine culture, and the idea of a Ptsor Shield malfunctioning in a Phase Nine culture was on first thought fantastic.

But not on second thought. The Shield broadcast a constant series of negative waves; an endless repetition of the idea of *not being.* All that it needed in order to function was a geocentric culture, the individuals of which *wanted* to believe precisely what the Shield repeatedly told them: that the alien life form registered upon their retinas was not real.

Geocentricism was an integral part of a Phase Nine culture. However, geocentricism is a mature immaturity, and even in a Phase Nine culture there exist certain individuals who have not yet acquired that facility in the manipulation of transcendental logic that enables them to regard unpleasant phenomena and either replace them with pleasanter things or reject them altogether.

"You can't stay here, you know," the little girl standing at the entrance said.

Do you think your mother would mind?

"I think she might. I don't think she'd like you, anyway. Your clothes are so funny. And your hair! It's so

long! And what makes it grow on the side of your head instead of on top?"

Ghan considered for a moment. While the small creature standing before him did not present a very serious obstacle to his investigation, she did create a problem just the same. If he wanted to carry on his work with maximum efficiency, he would have to find some way to keep her from intruding upon his 'pathic field.

One way would be to tell her the truth. That could serve a double purpose: if she believed him, her curiosity would be satisfied, and if she repeated what he told her to an adult, her story would be instantly discredited.

"I am different from you in many ways," he said, speaking aloud for better effect. "I come from another star."

The little girl regarded him calmly with her blue, wide-open eyes. "Which star?" she asked.

"It is so far you cannot see it from this world—" He paused, watching her face, waiting for it to betray the surprise she must be experiencing. But her face remained serene and her eyes continued to regard him quietly out of the blue depths of her mind.

"But you can't really be so different," she said after a while. "Even if you do come from another star and even if you do have crazy hair and talk funny, you must be like other people inside."

"Not quite like them," Ghan said.

"I mean, you must have a heart, and there must be a place in your head where you think, and—"

"I do not have a heart. You see, we function differently on the world where I live. We—" His words trailed away. The little girl's eyes, which he had assumed were opened to their maximum circumference, had opened even wider. .

"But you *must* have a heart."

"But I do not have. On my world—"

"*Everybody* has a heart."

"No—" He paused. The blue eyes had exhibited another unexpected phase. Mist obscured them now, and miniscule drops had begun coalescing in their corners. Then, for the first time in his life, Ghan was bewildered.

The little girl turned and ran away.

He watched until a corner of the barn hid her from view, and for a while he considered probing her. He decided against it. His original purpose had been merely to get rid of her. It did not matter whether that purpose had been accomplished by design or accident. What did matter was the fact that he was now free to continue his investigation without interruption.

And besides, idle curiosity was unbecoming in a Supreme Arbiter.

The snow around the summerhouse had taken on the bluish tinge of twilight. The temperature had dropped perceptibly, and Ghan was reminded of cool summer nights on Sosterich IV. For an unconventional moment he wished he were back there, reclining on the patio of his river villa, watching the frosty stars and fondling abstruse philosophies.

Nostalgia did not become a Supreme Arbiter any more than idle curiosity did. Annoyed with himself, he discarded it and began intensifying his field. This time he dispensed with trans-probes. As soon as his focus was established, he teleported.

The chaotic canyon in which he materialized dismayed him at first, but he was a veteran of the mad milieus of many civilizations and he adjusted himself without trouble. He withdrew into a dark entrance, out of physical contact with the churning mass of humans and vehicles that filled the floor of the canyon, and prepared for his first probe.

A middle-aged man came down the street. There was a noticeable confidence in his walk, a corresponding confidence in his handsome, well-preserved face. As he passed the entrance, Ghan slipped into his mind.

The man was climbing a precipitous mountain. He was sure-footed and agile and he found hand- and foot-holds in impossible places. He climbed higher and higher, staring resolutely at the sheer wall before him. Presently he paused to rest. He looked down then, and on the slope far below he saw another man. Uncontrollable hatred suffused him. He looked wildly about him for a weapon —a rock, a stone, even a stick—anything at all to hurl

down on the man below him. But the face of the mountain was utterly bleak and offered him nothing.

Before resuming his climb the man glanced upward. The mountain spired into the sky. The sun glittered coldly on its smooth polished surface. It had no ledges where a man could pause to rest; it was an endless obelisk, a perpendicular eternity.

The man began climbing again. Frantically, desperately—

An old man with a decayed face shuffled past the entrance. Ghan probed again.

He was descending a rotting stairway into a noisome pit. (Total identification with the subject was possible after one or two probes.) There was a scurrying of furry creatures about his legs and a constant obscene squeaking. He didn't want to descend the stairway; the thought of what awaited him below filled him with unspeakable terror; and yet he continued to descend, down, down, ever downward, and there were cold, slimy creatures intertwining about his legs now, and abruptly there was a cracking sound as one of the steps gave way, and he staggered and he almost fell into the loathsome Stygian depths—

A woman passed. After the stairway the warm spacious room seemed tranquil and secure. But not for long. Presently he noticed a twisted scar disfiguring one of the rose walls, and fleeing from the scar toward a vague doorway he nearly stepped into a ragged crevice that yawned without warning in the blood-red rug. He managed somehow to avoid the crevice, but when he looked for the doorway again it was gone—

A young man walked briskly by. Another mountain, a gentle mountain this time. The lower slopes were green with grass and the forested upper slopes slanted leisurely into a blue and cloudless sky. It was morning and a summer sun warmed his back.

There were three women following him. Occasionally he paused in his ascent and glanced back at them. The first one had dark disheveled hair, and long graceful legs. But she had no face. The second one was half chimera, half reality. Most of the time she was a gray silhouette,

but sometimes the silhouette resolved into a voluptuous body and a trite, pretty face.

The third one was a tenuous shadow—

It was dawn when Ghan returned to the summerhouse. He sat on the bench for a long time, staring through the interstices of the latticed roof at the sky. The sky was gray at first, but after a while the grayness softened subtly to pink, and then to a washed blue. Finally the first pale rays of the sun brimmed over a scalloped rim of hills and streamed across the fields.

He heard voices then, and caught vague thought patterns. Presently three figures came round the corner of the barn and approached the summerhouse. One of them was the little girl who had run away the preceding day. The other two were adults: a thin, pale woman, and a tall man carrying a double-barreled shotgun.

"There, you see!" the little girl said, as they stopped before the doorway. "Now you've got to believe me!"

The man and the woman stared into the interior. They looked at the bench, the table, the transmitter (the transmitter was a tesseract, as invisible to three-dimensional beings as a cube would be to two-dimensional creatures). They looked at Ghan.

"Why, Alicia," the woman said, "there's no one here at all."

"But there is, Mother! Can't you see him? You're looking right at him! He's come all the way from a star and he doesn't have a heart and sometimes you can hardly hear him he talks so soft, and—"

"Alicia! That's enough. You're imagining all this."

"But I'm not!" The little girl was crying.

There was a puzzled expression on the woman's pinched face. Ghan slipped briefly into her mind—There was a forest, dark and tangled, and he was stumbling along an overgrown path. He did not know where the path led, but it had to take him out of the forest if he followed it long enough. The forest could not be forever. Somewhere in the forest there had been a clearing a long time ago—or was it a garden?—he could not remember. Once he had found it, he was sure, and now, more than

anything in the world, he wanted to find it again. For he hated the forest, with its pale sickly foliage and its loathsome ophidian vines; he hated the forest by day, but he hated it more by night when you could not see, when you could not find paths, not even overgrown travesties of paths that led nowhere, and you had to crouch there in the misshapen shadows, in the abysmal darkness, in the lonely night—

The little girl was still crying, and the woman took her hand and led her away. The man stood by impassively, the gun slung under his arm. He had a thin, windburned face and watery gray eyes. Ghan probed him as he stood there, not expecting to find, and not finding, any appreciable deviation from the general pattern his previous probes had established.

The symbol itself was a little more bleak, perhaps, than the others. Essentially, it was a featureless dreary plain. There were no mountains, there weren't even any hills. He was standing immobile in the midst of endless empty acres beneath an endless empty sky. There was a slight wind blowing; a cold wind. He had nebulous memories of another wind, a much warmer one; but that one had blown so long ago that he had forgotten how it had felt, and the cold wind wasn't so bad anyway, once you were used to it—

After a while the man turned and followed the woman and the little girl. The corner of the barn hid him from view and Ghan returned his attention to the sky.

It was such a magnificent sky that it was difficult to understand how anything ignoble could occur beneath it. The object of living—Ghan remembered the simple Sosterich credo—is to die gracefully. Under such a sky even the most uncultured savage should have been able to attain that ideal.

But not a semicultured savage. Not a Phase Nine barbarian.

Never a civilization honeycombed with fear. Never a race of people dominated by fear: fear-of-each-other, fear-of-themselves, fear-of-the-unfamiliar. For fear destroys compassion and nurtures hatred and misery. Fear is the accomplice of violence, the assassin of peace.

In a planetary sense, the danger of such a civilization was frightening; in a galactic sense, it was appalling.

There was little object in continuing the investigation. Ghan reached for the transmitter. His tentacular fingers sought its minuscule activator.

There was little object, but still—

He had never seen a civilization destroyed. All civilizations previously analyzed had evinced at least one redeeming feature, presented at least one area of healthy tissue into which the curative philosophy could be injected.

He had never seen a civilization destroyed and he realized with sudden clarity that he never wanted to see one destroyed, and that above all he did not want to be instrumental in the destruction of this one.

Perhaps, somewhere, there was healthy tissue. Perhaps, if he looked long enough, he could find it.

His fingers fell away from the transmitter. He began expanding his field.

Another chaotic canyon. It was much like the other, though there seemed to be more confusion. But that was probably due to the time of day. He had difficulty finding a practical station but finally established himself in an unfrequented alleyway.

His first two subjects were mountain climbers. The fear motive in each case was typically predominant. His third subject represented a curiously recurrent pattern—the forest symbol, with the vague remembrance of a clearing that, in some cases, had the aspects of a garden and in others a grassy meadow.

The next three subjects were mountain climbers again. In despair, Ghan tried another section of the city.

And another—

Mountains and forests and dimly remembered gardens, and fear and hatred and bewilderment—

A tall man of noble mien passed Ghan's station. There was a great plain covered with monolithic statues. He was traveling across the plain, through the maze of statues, bowing before almost all of them, kissing the stone feet of others. In the distance a great obelisk pointed into the

sky, its peak half obscured by fleecy clouds. It was white and shining and beautiful.

Here at least, Ghan thought, was a possibility.

Presently the man realized that he was not alone on the plain. There was furtive movement all around him, and once he came upon another man paying homage. Quickly he slipped behind another statue, swiftly kissed its feet, then hurried in a wide detour, bowing and kneeling and kissing, around the other man. He breathed more easily when he was sure he was ahead, but when he looked at the obelisk again it was just as distant as before—just as remote.

Ghan's own mind had become an arctic steppe. For a moment the symbol had misled him, but only for a moment. The symbol was just another mountain; a two-dimensional mountain. The obstacle was not height, but ceremony; the goal was still dominance, but it was disguised as apotheosis.

And the motivating factor was the same. *Fear.*

He returned to the summerhouse.

It was afternoon and a slight wind was coming over the white fields. The sky was still clear and blue. He reached for the transmitter and his fingers again sought the tiny activator. And then he paused.

Beside the transmitter there was a folded sheet of tablet paper weighted down with a stone. Wonderingly, he picked it up. On its outer surface, laboriously printed, were the words, "Mr. Gan."

He unfolded the paper.

Around its border a series of curious designs had been painstakingly penciled. At first glance they appeared to be little more than misshapen circles, indented at the top and elongated at the bottom. But each was crayoned an intense red and each was labeled—so that there could be no room for doubt—with the word, "hart." In the center of the paper there was a much larger, though unmistakably similar design. That one was not colored, but within its outline were several lines of carefully printed words:

I am sory you dont have a hart. My
mother says your my magination but I

no your real and I think your nice.
Will you be my valentine?

For a long time Ghan sat motionless in the summerhouse. The February wind coming over the winter fields rattled the rose vines and ruffled his cilia. The sheet of paper in his hand fluttered every now and then, and each time he heard the sound he looked down at the incarnadine hearts and the sprawling simple words.

Finally he got up and moved over the dead mounds of last summer's garden toward the buildings. He went around the corner of the barn and he approached the small white dwelling behind the barn.

The little girl was standing on the porch steps talking earnestly to a disheveled doll which she had propped upon the railing. She did not notice his approach and he stopped some distance from her, standing quietly in the snow.

He waited until she turned and saw him, and then he slipped into the blue depths of her eyes—

The clearing *was* a garden. There were quaint multicolored parterres and green pathways. There were alabaster fountains and the laughing sound of water. There was sunlight and warm summer air.

He walked through the garden, gently. He came to a stream of blue water with a delicate bridge arching over it. He stepped onto the bridge and looked down into the clear untroubled water. A bluebird flew down from a white cloud and perched upon his shoulder.

From the bridge he could see the forest. It was a dark forbidding forest and it grew riotously all around the garden. Even as he watched it seemed to move in closer, and abruptly the bluebird on his shoulder flew away—

The little girl was regarding him solemnly. "I came to thank you for your valentine," Ghan said. "It was very beautiful."

"You were gone away and I didn't know if you'd be back," the little girl said. "But I left it just in case. Will you be going away again?"

"No," Ghan said. "Not for a long time."

FROM: Ghan, Supreme Arbiter
Field Base 1
Sol III

TO: Administrator of Alien Cultures
Stellar Headquarters
Sosterich III

GENERAL: Any governing body, in order to attain objective judgment and in order to have the right to eliminate whole civilizations, or fractions thereof, as a consequence of that judgment, must possess two prerequisite qualities: (1) Divinity; (2) Omniscience. It is the considered opinion of the Supreme Arbiter that the present Sosterich governing body possesses neither quality (1) nor quality (2).

It is the further considered opinion of the Supreme Arbiter that the branch of the present Sosterich governing body, known as the Administration of Alien Cultures, is opinionated, impetuous, and unreliable; and that the subdivision of the Administration of Alien Cultures, known as the Office of Perimeter Research, is incapable of seeing one micromillimeter beyond the collective probosises on its collective countenances.

SPECIFIC: The Sosterich Federation is the oldest known civilization in the galaxy, yet in the very heyday of its intellectual maturity it is apparently immune to the basic truth that the future of any race should not be extrapolated from the minds of those who are its administrators today, but from the minds of those who will be its administrators tomorrow.

The potential future of Sol III has nothing whatever to do with the appalling present of Sol III.

Its administrators-to-be await our guidance.

REQUEST: (1) That the present Supreme Arbiter be transferred to the Office of Alien Guidance and,

(2) That he be assigned to duty on Sol III immediately.

To: Ghan, Director of Alien Guidance (Temp.)
Guidance Center I
Sol III

FROM: Administrator of Alien Cultures
Stellar Headquarters
Sosterich III

GENERAL: SPECIFIC: Request granted.

FACTUAL ARTICLE

My co-editor rated this factual article superb and enjoyed it as much as the stories . . . so much that he wanted it included, so we comply.

As Eusapia Palladino was the victim of a head injury as a child, it is interesting to note the circumstances under which other people's psychic abilities have evinced themselves. Peter Hurkos' powers turned on for him after he had landed on his head in a fall from a thirty-foot ladder. Another psychic, G.M., had her abilities turn on as a result of being a "battered child." Yet a third suffered ten days of total blindness immediately prior to receiving psychic seeing.

AND STILL IT MOVES

by Eric Frank Russell

IF ASKED TO NAME THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY character in the last hundred years, the leading candidate for the title of Psi-Psupreme, nine people out of ten

might nominate Daniel Dunglas Home. They'd make a second-rate choice. For all his formidable abilities and baffling performances Home was easily outclassed by an illiterate peasant girl from a village in southern Italy.

The greater wizard.

Name of Eusapia Palladino. Born January 21, 1854, in Minerverno, province of Bari, a time and place where none were richer either in intellect or this world's goods. Her mother died soon after she was born. When she was twelve her father was murdered by bandits. Between-times she was dropped on her head and sustained a cranial injury that left a small gap in her skull.

Through her unfortunate childhood Eusapia Palladino betrayed not the slightest hint of her remarkable future. Of nondescript appearance and seemingly average intelligence, she had all the willfulness and independence of an orphan left to hang around until she could find her own niche in life. Most of the time she went her own sweet way, rebuffing all attempts to steer her in directions mere adults thought she ought to go.

By age fourteen she had acquired the sexual precocity of her race and climate. This is not to say she was immoral. Rather did she have an eye too obviously and enthusiastically appreciative of any prime hunk of beefcake that might amble to within viewing distance. She retained this characteristic for most of her life and frequently it became a source of acute embarrassment to scientists more interested in her paranormal feats than in her mediocre charms. In the interest of strict accuracy it must be said that she was no Venus; she was short in the leg, dumpy, inclined to fatness and waddled around with the gait of an overfed duck.

Also at age fourteen Eusapia began to experience strange inward stirrings other than those attributable to budding womanhood. In later years she described these sensations in detail: a tremendous thrill resembling a peculiar current of energy that flowed upward and through her spine, across a shoulder and down an arm as far as the elbow where, in some mysterious way, it seemed to pour outward. Whenever this feeling came upon her she was seized by an irresistible urge to lift things or move things

—without bothering to touch them or recognizing any need to do so.

So pointless and unprofitable a desire could be explained by the fact that Eusapia was an adolescent with a hole in her head. No doubt the simple folk of her village would have been well-satisfied with this diagnosis were it not for a fact too incredible to believe, too self-evident to disbelieve.

Things moved.

It was a major sensation. The entire village awoke from its rural slumbers. Each and every spectator dragged along half a dozen companions to bear witness to his own sobriety and the fact that they could see what he could see. Gratified at thus becoming the center of attention, Eusapia juggled pots and pans, jugs and ornaments, tables and chairs, levitating them with an impressive equanimity that astounded the onlookers. Most anything transportable flew through the air with the greatest of ease, untouched by human hands.

Church authorities retired to a dignified distance and left the laymen to argue whether this paragon was saint or witch, blessed by God or possessed by the Devil. Finally, with Eusapia's consent, her admirers settled for spiritualistic mediumship and thus offended neither Jehovah nor Beelzebub. This is what might be called rural diplomacy. Besides, at that time the spirits of the dear departed were very much in fashion, plenty popular enough to be a worldwide fad.

With that problem settled the people commenced to brag, as people will. Eusapia had put their kraal on the map and they intended it to stay there. This article is proof positive that they succeeded. News of Eusapia's weird accomplishments spread far and wide, almost wholly by word of mouth. It wasn't long before she was conducting her own circles and gaining a useful living as a medium. For the next twenty years she was more or less kept by a growing group of faithful followers who let their mouths hang open while tables floated and chairs jounced around. She was definitely the better mousetrap.

The number of times Eusapia put over her performance during these two decades has never been recorded, will

never be known. No reasonable guess can be made of the size of the multitude who witnessed her efforts during this long time, or the number of smarties who tried to catch her out and failed. All that can be said with assurance is that repeatedly her story reached the big cities of Europe where it was received with nods and winks, dismissed with shrugs.

In 1888, when Eusapia was thirty-four years old and had already surpassed D. D. Home in sheer profuseness of phenomena, the ludicrous tale of her lifting abilities came to the ears of Professor Ercole Chiaja of Naples. He'd heard it before, at least a dozen times. That was what intrigued him. How could a story so silly be so darned persistent? He thought it over. He had a couple of days to spare and was suffering a persistent itch in his bump of curiosity.

Chiaja went to see Eusapia. He introduced himself, informed her that (a) he had an open mind, (b) sharp eyes, and (c) was a Neapolitan—the latter being tantamount to announcing his arrival from Missouri. Possibly feeling that this called for a king-size celebration, Eusapia moved most everything except the house itself. As a clincher, if such were needed, she floated a short distance from the floor, complete with the chair in which she was sitting.

Returning home, Chiaja spent a few days trying to work out how he'd been taken. Obviously there had to be fraud somewhere. You just can't abolish natural laws like that. But the longer he thought of it the more surely he came back to the only answer: "You *can*—because she *did!*"

Frankly baffled, he visited Eusapia again. This time he opined that the true test of deliberateness is the ability to do it twice. Eusapia did not resent the suggestion despite that she'd already done it more times than she'd care to count. She obliged by repeating the whole performance from first to last.

Back in Naples, Chiaja brooded quite a piece, came to several conclusions. First, some if not all of the phenomena had been produced in circumstances that made trickery well-nigh impossible. Secondly, with or without the aid of hypothetical spirits, one cannot impart motion to an inanimate object except by applying force thereto.

Thirdly, since physical force had not been visibly applied, some invisible form of force must have been used.

Conceivably it could be mental force. If so, Eusapia was a cerebral freak worthy of exhaustive study. There were other specialists more competent than himself to cope with a strange female who could poke things around with her mind. In Italy itself was the ideal investigator, namely, Professor Cesare Lombroso. On August 9, 1888, the *Fanfulla della Domenica* published an open letter from Chiaja in which he invited Lombroso to try solve the puzzle of Eusapia Palladino.

Lombroso, a formidable character, was at that time highly regarded as the world's leading alienist and criminologist—and he was also one of the then popular spiritualist movement's severest critics. As such he had no time to waste upon the machinations of moaning mediums. He replied to Chiaja in polite terms, saying he wasn't interested.

Nothing daunted, Chiaja wrote him direct, urging him not to be misled by the thousand-and-one fantastic stories littering spiritualism's garbage dump. Lombroso refused to bite. Chiaja wrote yet again. Lombroso replied somewhat testily that he was taking no time off to investigate the figments of someone else's imagination.

By now Chiaja found his own incredulity becoming too much for his comfort. Many days had gone by; in retrospect the astonishing capers of Eusapia had acquired an illusionary quality. He needed to reassure himself. He went to see Eusapia a third time.

The result of that was that he resumed chivvying Lombroso more energetically than ever and continued to do so for most of three years. At last, with great reluctance, Lombroso gave way, presumably because he did not relish the idea of being pestered for the rest of his natural life.

In February, 1891, the ungainly Eusapia Palladino let her big eyes roam with undisguised appetite over a slightly hostile committee of six: Professor Cesare Lombroso, Professor Tamburini, Messrs. Ascensi, Gigli, Vizioli and Ciolfi

Somewhat impatiently, Lombroso invited her to perform.

She did.

In full light, with no paraphernalia worth mentioning, she produced levitational and telekinetic phenomena of a kind and quantity that the most accomplished vaudeville illusionist would greatly have envied. The six watched her like hawks, hoping to catch her out. They didn't. They subjected her to several spur-of-the-moment tests. It made no difference. She couldn't be trapped. Eusapia went home, triumphant. The six remained, dumbfounded. They had been confronted with precisely the same fact that Chiaja had faced.

Eppur si muove!

Lombroso was a specialist of some moral courage. Much as it went against the grain for him to do so, he published a paper vouching for the genuineness of Eusapia's talents. He, personally, confirmed that she could and did do the remarkable things she was alleged to do. He confirmed them because he could no longer deny them, having witnessed them for himself.

But, emphasized Lombroso, he wasn't yet ready to swallow the spirit-theory. Eusapia had offered no proof that spirits existed, had done nothing to imply their existence. He was thoroughly satisfied that Eusapia Palladino could exercise a power not yet known to science. Somewhere, he believed, there must be a perfectly natural explanation and it was his opinion that such an explanation was well worth seeking.

The international spiritualist movement drew cold comfort from Lombroso's strictures and was swift to seek consolation by claiming that a "great medium" had been "indorsed by science." Thus is science itself used to establish superstition's right to rush in and fill any vacuum left by science.

Lombroso's paper did not bring down upon him the tremendous, worldwide torrent of abuse such as had almost drowned the reputation of William Crookes when, at an earlier date, he had similarly vouched for the paranormal aptitudes of D. D. Home.

There were several reasons why Lombroso escaped a hearty lambasting at the hands of his scientific fellows. Currently spiritualism was at the high peak of popularity,

any attack upon it was by the same token unpopular—and even the professional scientists like to be circumspect. Then again, although Lombroso had given support to a medium, he had refused support to superstition and that made him a good deal less vulnerable to attack.

Lastly but far from leastly, Lombroso was not a physicist such as Crookes had been. He was an eminent alienist, just about the last man on earth with whom to bandy words about the mentality of the credulous. Would-be critics—and there was a veritable army of them—found themselves in the unhappy position of having to fight Lombroso on his own ground, not on theirs. The majority of them found little difficulty in perceiving that discretion is the better part of valor.

As for Eusapia, she resumed her former life among her own followers—until Lombroso's testimonial hit the headlines. That did it! Practically overnight she was swept to world-fame or world-notoriety, according to how one looks at it.

Forthwith a number of scientists and scientific laymen fought to get at her. Their motives were various. Some possibly thought they were climbing aboard the Lombroso bandwagon. Some were piqued and could not rest until curiosity was satisfied. A good many hoped to prove trickery by showing how it was done. The majority were imbued by genuine interest in what looked like a new and fruitful field of research. By and large they were honest, intelligent men anxious to discover just what made Eusapia tick.

Thus she became the first and only paranormal to provide a long, detailed case history for the experts.

An annoying difficulty popped up right at the start and stayed put for keeps. It was about the worst thing that could have happened. It was the sort of thing that isn't thought of in fiction but does occur in real life and thus teaches authors to be humble.

Fame went to Eusapia's head. She already had something of the mentality of a juvenile delinquent and the limelight didn't improve her any. She became more temperamental than any prima donna and expressed her moods by cheating. Time and again she aggravated her investigators by switching from inexplicable and often spec-

tacular phenomena to silly, childish tricks that would not have fooled a kid of nine.

Whenever she found herself disliking the fact that experts were far more interested in her as a psionic specimen than as a warm-blooded woman—and she resented it very often—she became petulant and tried to bollix their efforts with stupid stratagems. Whenever she happened to be tired, bored, off-color or otherwise in no humor to produce the real McCoy, she conceived the notion that she was the great La Palladino who could not let her public down. The show must go on even when the star couldn't blow hard enough to fill a penny balloon. The show went on—wholly faked.

As soon as these tantrums became known they were sheer joy to a sizable part of the scientific world that had no time for Eusapia and little patience with those who did have time for her. The critics who had been lying low now emerged in full cry, baying like hounds closing in for the kill. From then on their theme remained constant: a fraud part of the time has got to be a fraud all the time.

Such a situation provided poor help and little encouragement to the next bunch of experts who handled Eusapia in 1892. But they persisted and put her through the hoop. Not once. Not twice. Seventeen times.

Gallantly fumbling for an effective technique where none yet existed, they were Dr. Emacora, Dr. Charles du Prel of Munich, Dr. Aksakov of Moscow, Professor Charles Richet of the Sorbonne, Professor Buffern, Professor Gerosa and, presiding over the inquisition, Professor Schiaparelli, director of the Observatory of Milan. They issued a report, careful, restrained, but positive. It said, in effect, that Eusapia Palladino had done things that could not be done. They could offer no theory to account for it.

Next, Professor Wagner, of the University of St. Petersburg, presided over a number of "seances" in Naples where Eusapia got going with the old routine and left the unfortunate Wagner holding nothing save considerable food for thought. Not much value can be attached to that episode: for all his professorship Wagner was far from being a competent investigator and was already neck-deep in spiritualistic rigmaroles.

Eusapia now got passed along to Professor Julian Ochorowicz of Warsaw, a determined investigator who liked to dig deep for prime causes. Ochorowicz was a sticker. He made Eusapia do her act no less than forty times. All he got out of it was the frustrating fact that she could do forty times a lot of things she shouldn't have been able to do a mere once.

Back in Rome, 1894, Eusapia created motion without applying visible force for the benefit of an investigatory party consisting of Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, Dr. Dobrzycki, Professor Richet, Professor Danilewski, and Professor Lombroso, "the Master of Turin." A short time afterward she did it again—and again and again—for the benefit of a foursome made up of Mr. F. H. W. Myers, Professor Richet, Professor Ochorowicz, and Sir Oliver Lodge.

The next year Eusapia accepted an invitation to Britain. The trip proved a gigantic flop. The hot-blooded, excitable Eusapia found herself ill at ease among her cold-blooded, phlegmatic British hosts. She didn't like their snooty ways; they didn't like her pagan manners. There was a wonderful clash of personalities. Eusapia infuriated British wives by switching from the psionic to the psexual, then annoyed the husbands by cheating right, left and center, being caught out all along the line and not caring a hoot. The baying of the hounds grew deafening. Eusapia took her departure under what critics described, with much licking of lips and displaying of sharp teeth, as a "cloud of ignominy."

That should have been the end of her. It wasn't. Once back in the sunny warmth of Naples she recovered her confidence and worldwide howls of "Fraud!" rang upon deaf ears. Willingly she played handy-pandy with Dr. Paolo Visani-Scozzi, a leading neurologist, and fazed him from here to there. Around the same time she took on without a single qualm and baffled a group consisting of Colonel Albert de Rochas, Dr. Dariex, Baron de Watteville, Dr. Joseph Maxwell, and Professor Sabatier.

Through 1896-7-8 she really got into her stride, despite the steady muttering from across the English Channel where Professor Henry Sidgwick, at that time one of the

leading lights of the National Society for Psychical Research, was damning her for a deceitful hussy. She put on a long and spectacular series of performances, usually described as "seances," at Auteuil, Choisy-Yvrac, Tremezzo, Naples, and Montfort l'Amaury. These were well attended by experts of one sort or another.

At all of them Eusapia continued shamelessly to ogle any member of the audience who took her fancy. Characteristically she bedevilled investigators with pieces of petty tomfoolery—among which she interspersed samples of phenomena that shouldn't happen, couldn't happen but nevertheless did happen.

Two witnesses, G. de Fontenay and Colonel Albert de Rochas, were sufficiently impressed to write and publish books about the mysterious doings of Eusapia. Outlets for that sort of stuff were—and still are—all too few. The recognized scientific journals barred such material from their pages and resolutely ignored the fact that those probing beyond the frontier of knowledge included scientists of world renown. Thus reports, discussions, theories, and debates were confined to individual books, pamphlets—or the pages of spiritualistic publications. Again superstition was filling a vacuum, as invariably it does.

Among those attending the performances at Montfort l'Amaury was Professor Camille Flammarion. He was sufficiently impressed to invite Eusapia to Paris. She accepted with what Mark Twain has described as "the calm confidence of a Christian with four aces." That confidence proved justified enough to hush the distant voice of Sidgwick. She levitated this, that, and the other, including herself, for the benefit of audiences among which were Flammarion, both the Curies, Morselli, Lodge, de Rochas, Richet, d'Arsonval, Myers, Porro, Vaugeois, Ballet, Bergson and many more well-known in the world of science.

In Genoa, 1901, substantially the same experiments were conducted in full light by Professor Porro, M. de Albertis, and Professor Morselli. Seated in a chair Eusapia went up, chair and all, to table-top height while Porro and Morselli tried in vain to detect evidence of pressure on the floor beneath the chair. Then, with her ankles tied

to the chairlegs, her hands held by witnesses standing either side, she caused a wooden table two feet by three to float nine inches above the floor. Soon afterward she repeated these and similar stunts *ad lib* for the benefit of Professors Porro, Morselli, Bozzano, Barzini, Venzano, Vassalo, Lombroso, and a number of associated laymen. Three of them published books on the subject. So far as can be traced not a single scientific journal bothered even to review a copy. However the professional vacuum-fillers whooped 'em up.

Through the following years the story remained much the same. Dr. Carmelo Samona gave Eusapia the works, published his report in a sheet called "Annals of Psychic Science," there being no place else. Professor Henry Morselli, Director of the Clinic for Nervous and Mental Diseases at Genoa, put Eusapia through long, tedious sessions in his laboratory, wrote up the result in a tremendous work of two volumes. In 1907 Professor Cesare Lombroso followed suit; with his assistants Doctors Imoda and Audenino he persuaded Eusapia to play in the clinical laboratories of the University of Turin. Lombroso then wrote a book. The same year Professors Oscar Scarpa, Luigi Lombardi, Galeotti, Bottazzi, Sergio Panzini, De Amicis, Charles Foa, Aggazzotti, and others enticed Eusapia into the physiological laboratory of the University of Naples. They found she was a shameless cheat—but not all the time. The other times could not be satisfactorily explained.

By 1908 Eusapia was spending more time in laboratories than in spook-ridden attics or cellars. Professor Bottazzi got her to perform several times in his laboratory while checked by himself, Professor Gilman Hall, and Dr. Herbert R. Moody, chemistry professor of the City College of New York.

During the same period, 1905-6-7-8, Eusapia was observed, examined, inspected, analyzed and generally given what was then considered the Full Treatment at the Paris Psychological Institute. She was made to levitate this, that and the other, hidden or in plain view, loose or caged, and do it while standing up, sitting down, lying full length bound or unbound, in dim red light, half-light, full light,

almost every thinkable light. She cheated, taunted and tantalized—but after proving herself a barefaced fraud, immediately went on to prove that she wasn't or made it impossible to prove that she was.

A typical instance: surrounded by Ballet, the Curies, de Gramont, Courtier, Bergson, Richet, Yourievitch, Vaugeois, Favre, d'Arsonval, Flammarion, Dastre, Sardou, Delanne, and several others, she was seated upon a weighing machine. De Gramont held her legs; d'Arsonval held her right hand, Yourievitch her left. The others formed a close chain around her. She was then invited to levitate a nearby table the legs of which had been encased in special metal sheaths which, it was thought, might ground or screen whatever power she was using.

Up went the table, slowly, tortuously, to a height of ten or twelve inches, and then dropped back. They asked her if she could lift it completely clear of the leg-sheaths. Up it went again, gradually came free, moved laterally and with a peculiar wobbling motion, dropped to the floor. Meanwhile the weighing machine had registered an increase in mass roughly equal to that of the table.

The Paris Psychological Institute published a two-volume report on the fun it had had with Eusapia over these four years. It became part of spiritualism's holy library. The scientific world gave it the bum's rush.

Eusapia took revenge on Britain's National Society for Psychical Research in November-December 1908. Two members of the S.P.R.'s Council visited her, Mr. W. W. Baggally and the Hon. Everard Feilding. They were accompanied by the American psychic investigator, Hereward Carrington. Feilding was a chronic sceptic. Baggally was an expert illusionist who thought he had yet to meet a medium capable of anything extraordinary. The third one, Carrington, had devoted a lot of time to exposing spiritualistic frauds, knew a lot about slick tricks and had published a book on the subject.

This trio held a series of seances in Naples. It got them right back where Chiaja and Lombroso had been years before. *Eppur si muove!* Their report divided the S.P.R. into heatedly warring factions—the Sidgwick can't-kid-me mob versus the Feilding none-so-blind caucus.

Hereward Carrington and Dr. James H. Hyslop of the American Society for Psychical Research now persuaded Eusapia to visit the States. She arrived on November 10, 1909. It was a mistake. She found herself as much if not more of a fish out of water as she had been in Britain.

A raving mob of reporters raided her ship, shouted, shoved, brawled, demanded the immediate production of clearly visible and spectacular miracles. She was smuggled ashore and hidden, but an army of journalists tracked Carrington around with such persistence that they kept him from Eusapia and made his life a misery. In sheer desperation he made a bargain with them: Eusapia's first seance would be held especially for the benefit of the press if they'd cease to chivvy her thereafter.

It was done. All papers made reports on the result, the New York *Times* and New York *Sun* writing it up at full length. The gist of their remarks was that strange stunts had been performed and "nobody had succeeded in detecting fraud."

Between then and June 18, 1910, when she returned home, Eusapia Palladino gave between thirty and forty paranormal exhibitions described as "seances." All in all they weren't so hot. She didn't like the States, didn't like the constant importunings from circus proprietors and vaudeville managers, didn't like the general atmosphere of sensationalism. To make matters worse she was beginning to feel her years, her powers were fading, she gave way frequently to the temptation to "fill in" with trickery.

She was patently fed up and had to be constantly chivvied by Carrington to produce. All the same, she did produce enough to worry some witnesses and convince others that the cup of wisdom is far from full. Among her audiences were Professor R. W. Wood (physics, Johns Hopkins), Professor Augustus Trowbridge (physics, Princeton), Professor Hugo Munsterberg (psychology, Harvard), Dr. Charles R. Dana (psychiatry, Cornell), Professor E. B. Wilson (biology, Princeton), Professor Dickinson Miller (philosophy, Columbia), Professor H. G. Lord (philosophy, Columbia), Professor W. B. Pitkin (philosophy, Columbia), Professor Frederick Peterson (psychiatry, Columbia), Professor William Hallock

(physics, Columbia), James L. Kellogg, John W. Sargent, and Howard Thurston—all professional illusionists—and a good many more.

Dana, Hallock, Miller, Peterson, Pitkin, Trowbridge, Wilson, and Wood published a joint statement in *Science,* May 20, 1910—reprinted in New York *Times*—to the effect they'd found plenty of evidence of trickery, none of supernormal powers. This was hardly to be wondered at, seeing that Eusapia had not strained herself unduly to impress them.

On the other hand, with typical quirk of character she took a fancy to Howard Thurston, then a top-flight magician. Thurston, who considered with good reason that his calling made him an expert trapper of tricksters, was sufficiently impressed with Eusapia to write to the New York *Times,* May 12, 1910, affirming that she could do and had done things not possible by any form of fraud and publicly offering to "forfeit $1,000 to any charitable institution named if it can be proved that Madame Palladino cannot levitate a table without resort to trickery or fraud." The New York *Times* gave it considerable publicity, but there were no takers.

A most curious feature of one United States seance has been played down, possibly because it is not thought to have any significance. Surprising that Professors Wood and Trowbridge didn't ponder it—they were both there at the time.

This was the third seance, held at Lincoln Square Arcade, New York City, November 19, 1909. A dozen people attended, including Professors Wood and Trowbridge, also Dr. A. Caccini. The latter brought with him a small fox terrier with the very laudable intention of "seeing if the animal perceived anything unusual during the seance." It didn't.

Eusapia's act was spoiled at the start by the strange behavior of a certain individual identified in reports only as "Doctor X." This character seated himself opposite her and fastened her with a "fixed glare." Eusapia became uneasy, then fidgety, insisted on Dr. X changing position a couple of times. He did so in complete silence, then resumed his glaring without batting an eyelid. Eusapia

struggled to produce phenomena and failed. She flew into a rage, demanded to know what was eating Dr. X. He refused to say a word or even open his mouth. His manner was that of one willing to maintain his glare unto the crack of doom. Finally, after a frustrating half-hour, Eusapia became slightly hysterical and refused to continue her attempts unless Dr. X left the circle. This he did, removing his fixed gaze and speaking for the first time—whereupon the following brief but noteworthy conversation took place between him and Mrs. Carrington.

Dr. X: "Of course, the table will move *now*."

Mrs. Carrington: "Why? Did you *will* the table not to move?"

Dr. X: "Certainly."

Mrs. Carrington: "Why? Don't you want any phenomena to occur?"

Dr. X: "No—*I want to prove my theory*."

Dr. X added that he was of the firm opinion that *if* Eusapia could move objects by expending mental energy in willing them to move, then by willing the contrary he could prevent such motion. He considered that he had proved his point. Some time afterward Hereward Carrington revealed that "Dr. X" was the late Leonard Keane Hirshburg of Johns Hopkins University. Nobody appears to have attached much importance to Hirshburg's negative form of proof despite that not long after he'd taken his departure the table did jazz around as he'd predicted.

Taken as a whole, Eusapia's trip to the States was unsatisfactory. Plenty of people caught her red-handed in the practice of deceit, said so in loud voices, and got massive publicity. Most of them made their condemnation one hundred per cent by the usual tactic of ignoring every exception to the rule, by disregarding all the instances where she'd successfully defied every attempt to catch her out. Some folk had found baffling, inexplicable happenings among the general foolery and conceded that she had something—though less of it than of yore.

She was on the skids and knew it. There was about her much of the pathetic desperation of the one-time genius whose powers are fading fast. For forty years she'd been

the Queen of the Supernormal and now her reign was nearly through. Her health was failing rapidly, her spirit with it. By the time she returned to Europe she was finished.

Nothing more was heard of her until May 16, 1918, when for the last time her name hit the headlines of the world's leading newspapers. Eusapia Palladino was dead.

During her life she had produced far more phenomena for the benefit of far more inquiring minds than had any similar oddity in human history. She was a blatant cheat who satisfied many eminent men beyond all reasonable doubt that she was not wholly a cheat, that from time to time she could do and did do things for which no satisfactory explanation could be found.

A noteworthy point: her inquisitors included eminent philosophers, psychiatrists, chemists, engineers, neurologists, alienists, physicists, astronomers—but not a single psionist. Every expert was working outside his own special field, compelled to operate by common sense and rule of thumb. There was not then and there is not now a rigorous technique for testing a paranormal under laboratory conditions. There were no psionists.

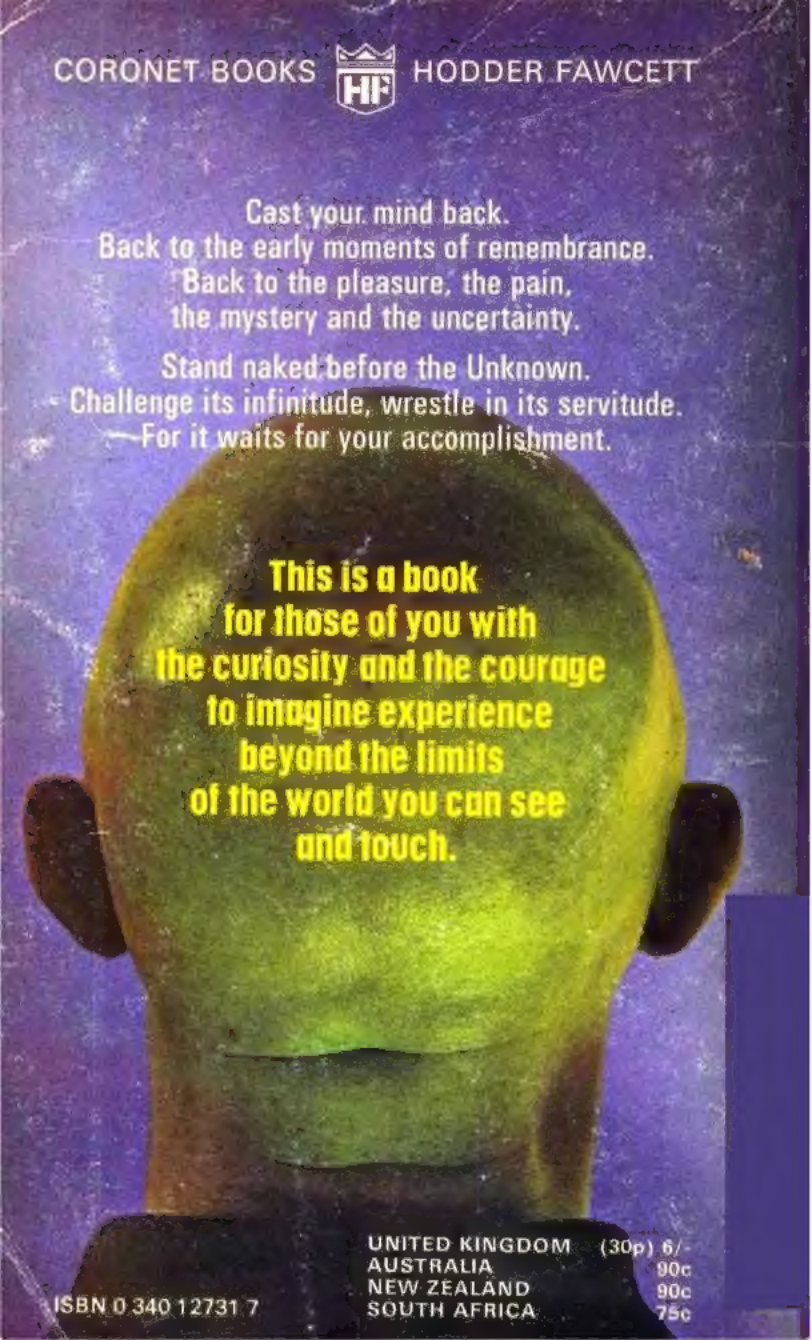
The strange story of her life might suitably be concluded by remarking that nobody seems ever to have suspected her of powers different from those advertised. It is remotely possible, for instance, that she was a natural-born hypnotist of formidable ability, quite unable to levitate a pretzel but fully capable of convincing everyone that she could do so—even to the extent of making them misread a weighing machine.

At that, she'd be no less a paranormal. Eusapia Palladino has gone into the past. She still remains an unsolved enigma.

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